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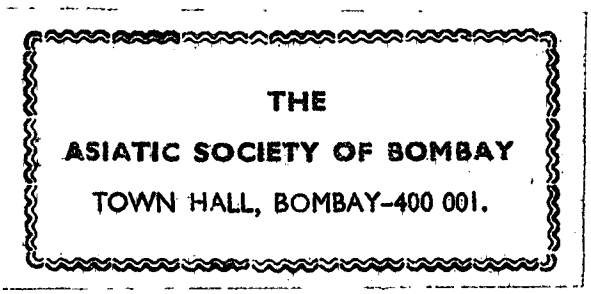

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CANNED CLASSICS

AND OTHER VERSES

1905

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

RUTHLESS RHYMES FOR HEARTLESS HOMES

BALLADS OF THE BOER WAR

MISREPRESENTATIVE MEN

FISCAL BALLADS

VERSE AND WORSE

A SONG-GARDEN FOR CHILDREN

MISREPRESENTATIVE WOMEN

FAMILIAR FACES

DEPORTMENTAL DITTIES

THE BOLSTER BOOK

LORD BELLINGER

A GROUP OF SCOTTISH WOMEN

THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS

CANNED CLASSICS

AND

OTHER VERSES

BY

HARRY GRAHAM

AUTHOR OF "DEPORTMENTAL DITTIES," "RUTHLESS RHYMES FOR HEARTLESS HOMES," ETC.

19 c 15

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To

J. L. GARVIN,

UNDER WHOSE KINDLY AUSPICES

MANY OF THEM FIRST SAW THE LIGHT,

THESE VERSES

ARE

GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

NOTE

Many of the verses published in this volume have already appeared in the pages of *Punch*, *The Observer*, *The Century Magazine*, and *The Graphic*, and are here reprinted by kind permission of the proprietors of those periodicals.

CONTENTS

CANNED CLASSICS

		PAGE
I.	THE PRISONER OF ZENDA. (AFTER ANTHONY HOPE)	13
II.	JANE EYRE. (AFTER CHARLOTTE BRONTË)	22
III.	DAVID COPPERFIELD. (AFTER CHARLES DICKENS)	29
IV.	VANITY FAIR. (AFTER W. M. THACKERAY)	35
V.	TRILBY. (AFTER GEORGE DU MAURIER)	41
VI.	THREE WEEKS. (AFTER MRS. ELINOR GLYN)	47
VII.	IVANHOE. (AFTER SIR WALTER SCOTT)	53
VIII.	UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. (AFTER MRS. H. B. STOWE)	61

OTHER VERSES

THE COMPLEAT SPORTSMAN 69

SOUNDING THE TOXIN 71

THE RUSTIC MUSE 73

Contents

	PAGE
The Silent City	75
Creature Comforts	77
"Jig-Saw"	79
The Serenade	81
The Vacuum Cleaner	83
The Sorrows of Crœsus	85
The Blue Board	87
The Men from Blankley's	89
The Busy Rich	91
Winter!	93
The Linguist	95
The Postman and the Lift	96
"Bad Form"	98
Presents	100
The Marriageable Age	102
The Poet's Life	105
The Battue of Berlin	107
The Craven	109
The Solitary Flapper	111
The New Nobility	113

Contents

PAGE

ANDREW'S ADVICE 115

TOPICAL ETHICS 117

THE DIRT CURE 119

NEW YEAR'S DAY 121

THE SEVEN DEADLY VIRTUES

THRIFT 125

CANDOUR 128

PUNCTUALITY 130

MODESTY 133

CLEANLINESS 136

AMIABILITY 139

SOBRIETY 142

CANNED CLASSICS

No. I.—THE PRISONER OF ZENDA

(After Anthony Hope)

In the days of George the Second,
When (to make my story short)
Immorality was reckoned
Nothing singular at Court,
Rudolph, Prince of Ruritania,
Of the Royal Elphberg line,

Had an overwelming mania
For an ancestress of mine.
She, alas! returned his passion
In a most un-English fashion.

Canned Classics

This suggests—if not discloses—
How it was I came to wear
One of Elphberg's clear-cut noses
And the crimson Elphberg hair.
Mother's beak is like a parrot's,
Father has a raven pate,
Yet my locks resemble carrots,
And my nose is long and straight.
(Thus the meanest of God's creatures
May inherit Royal features.)

Though a Rassendyll and British,
I need not apologise
For acquiring, through my skittish
Ancestress, the Elphberg eyes—
Eyes that ever since have glistened,
Bluer than the Hellespont,
Eyes that caused me to be christened
"Rudolph" at the parish font.
Thus Great-grandma's indiscretion
Found its ultimate expression.

Once, in search of occupation,
I from London town took wing,
To attend the Coronation
Of that very callow king
Who had suddenly succeeded
To the Ruritanian throne,

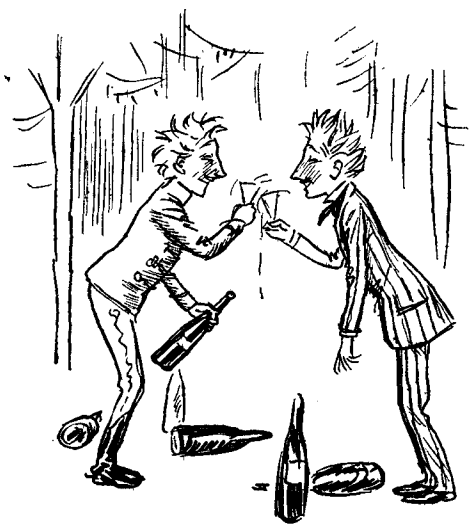
Which (as people hinted) he did
  Not intend to fill alone,
Having started a flirtation
With a Royal blood-relation.

Rudolph ('twas his name) had never
  Any aptitude displayed,
And a popular endeavour
  Had but recently been made
To enthrone somebody else, how-
  Ever base, and, rumour said,
Crown Black Michael, Duke of Strelsau,
  In his brother Rudolph's stead.
Michael too, so gossips clamoured,
Was of Rudolph's bride enamoured.

When I reached the town of Zenda
  (Though to Strelsau City bound),
I at once resolved to spend a
  Little time in looking round.
To the local woods I hied me,
  Fell asleep there ('twas in Spring),
And awoke to find beside me
  Rudolph, Ruritania's king.
How we stared at one another!
Each was like his own twin brother!

Canned Classics

Both the aides-de-camp-in-waiting
(Fritz von Tarlenheim and Sapt),
Spellbound, kept ejaculating
"Kolossal!" and laughed and clapp'd,
And, upon a brief inspection,
Such a likeness I could trace,
That I saw my own reflection
Mirrored in the monarch's face,
Like as button is to button,
Like as leg to leg of mutton!



When His Majesty had slightly
Rallied from this sudden shock,
He invited me politely
To discuss a pint of Hock.
Magnum after magnum followed,
Till beneath the board we fell,
And I knew that I had swallowed,
Oh, not wisely but too well,
As the King, with wider throttle,
Won by more than half a bottle.

On a seat those courtiers propped me,
Poured cold water on my head;
"What the douche—!" I cried. They stopped me.
"Help us rouse the King!" they said.
All in vain his face we lathered,
Pinched him, pushed him, pulled and lugged,

Saying, as at last we gathered
That his liquor had been drugged,
"Here's a pretty situation!
What about the Coronation?"

Fritz von Tarlenheim was weeping,
Tears obscured the sight of Sapt,
When the latter, lightly leaping
To his feet, my shoulder slapp'd.
"*You* shall play the part!" he shouted,
As my hand he tried to wring;
"*Your* credentials won't be doubted,
You must represent the King!
'Tis a pious imposition,
And we'll risk a recognition!"

By their arguments persuaded,
I consented to conspire,
And as Rudolph masqueraded
In that monarch's late attire,
While His Majesty, poor feller,
Of his uniform bereft,
In the corner of a cellar
Was appropriately left,
Lulled by alcohol's aroma
To a pleasant state of coma.

Canned Classics

Off I rode, with little warning,
  Reached the capital in state,
And was there installed, next morning,
  As a full-blown potentate.
Royal kinsfolk, by the dozen,
  Came their humble court to pay,
And I met King Rudolph's cousin
  And (alas!) his fiancée.
(As I kissed her brow discreetly,
Princess Flavia coloured sweetly.)

Never having been the lover
  Of a crimson-haired Princess,
Such delights did I discover
  In this single chaste caress,
That I yielded to the beauty
  Of this angel without wings,
Quite forgetting Honour, Duty,
  All those disagreeable things
Which no decent person smothers
When (ah, me!) he loves "another's."

Sapt, who saw that I was smitten,
  And that Flavia's heart was won,
Begged me to return to Britain,
  Which indeed I should have done
If a messenger (by cycle)
  Had not come, that very night,

The Prisoner of Zenda

Bearing tidings that Black Michael
  Had discovered Rudolph's plight
And (our agent was instructed)
Had him forcibly abducted!

Swiftly on his tracks we followed,
  To that residence remote
Where, within a dungeon, hollowed
  Underneath the castle moat,
On a slow starvation diet,
  In an atmosphere of drains,
Michael kept his brother quiet,
  Loaded with abuse and chains.
How he should be liberated
Was the problem we debated.

In the fortress lived a lady
  Named de Mauban (Antoinette),
With a past a trifle shady,
  And a present black as jet.

Canned Classics

She, of Princess Flavia jealous
(Michael loved them both, it seems),
Was inspired to come and tell us
All about that scoundrel's schemes;
She it was our footsteps guided,
When on action we decided.

Rudolph, by his captor's orders,
Had, to keep him safe and fast,
Three disreputable warders,
Each more loathsome than the last.
One a Belgian (from that nation
Which the Congo stocks with loot);
One, called Rupert, a relation
Of Black Michael, and a brute;
One a Scot who (said de Mauban)
Hailed—forgive the rhyme—from Oban!

Late one night we made an entry
Into Michael's citadel;
Sapt and Fritz engaged the sentry,
I repaired to Rudolph's cell.
There I struggled hard and long oh!
And, in true heroic style,
Slew the caitiff from the Congo
And the villain from Argyle,
While my brave collaborators
Dealt with all the other traitors.

Thus Black Michael's plot miscarried.
Rudolph, to his rights restored,
Took the pledge, and shortly married
The princess whom I adored.
She, poor soul, was broken-hearted,
I was speechless with distress,
And when I at length departed
By the Overland Express,
Sapt, with great consideration,
Saw me off at Strelsau Station.

* * * *

Years have passed, but still my finger
Bears the ring of Rudolph's Queen;
Still my mem'ry loves to linger
On the things that might have been!
In my boudoir in Belgravia,
When the lights are burning low,
I recall the lovely Flavia
Of those days of long ago,
And, though old and silver-headed,
Reader, I remain unwedded!

No. II.—JANE EYRE

(After Charlotte Brontë)

The beaver nightly might forsake
The dam he daily planned and piled;
While ev'ry coot from Gateshead lake,
Hiding its baldness in the brake,
Slept like a little child;
Alas! no sleep my eyelids knew!
I piled my dams the whole night through!

Mine was a cruel fate indeed!
An orphan, sensitive and small,
Condemned from infancy to lead
A wretched life with Mrs. Read,
My aunt, at Gateshead Hall,
I never knew a moment's fun
After I reached the age of one!

Jane Eyre

Through nights of fear and days of doom,
I scratched and bit, I fought and cried;
What hours I spent of rage and gloom,
When Aunt confined me in the room
Where Uncle Read had died!
Till on a happy scheme I hit,
And had an epileptic fit!

To convalescence rudely nursed,
Despatched by coach to Lowood School,
With other orphans there coerced
By brutal Mr. Brocklehurst,
Who kept an iron rule,
I reached, in misery and tears,
What folks entitle "riper years."

A governess I next became,
Employed by a provincial squire—
E. Fairfax Rochester by name—
A person whom, I stoutly claim,
To know was to admire.
How well he rode, and sang, and swore!
Each day I loved him more and more.

Canned Classics

My eyes would fill with happy tears
To see him in the saddle spring;
At concerts he surpassed his peers,
And when he sang "Oh, dry those ears!"
I wept like anything.
And then his language! I declare,
'Twas quite a treat to hear him swear.

Beneath his roof I dwelt content,
Concealing symptoms of surprise
On meeting, as I bedwards went,
A shrouded figure giving vent
To weird unearthly cries;
Though when it bit a fellow-guest,
I deemed it proper to protest.

Once, too, a sudden smell of fire
Awoke me, on a summer's night,
And (donning suitable attire)
I hastened to arouse the squire,
And found his bed alight.
His sheets were simply sheets of flame,
Which seemed to me a burning shame.

Jane Eyre

When shyly I inquired the cause,
My brusque employer merely laughed.
"It was, no doubt, my lantern-jaws
That lit those curtains, made of gauze,
That shield me from the draught;
Or else I may have been," he said,
"Light-headed when I went to bed."

In grateful tones he then confessed
That I had somehow saved his life,
And, as he finished getting dressed,
Implored (while buttoning his vest)
That I would be his wife.
"I love you, Jane," he gently cried.
"This is so sudden!" I replied.

At Millcote Church the parson grave
Demanded, "Wilt thou be this man's——?"
But ere the right response I gave,
A voice re-echoed through the nave
With "I forbid the banns!"
"False Rochester," it cried, "desist!
Or be proclaimed polygamist!"

Canned Classics

"Your former marriage-vows recall!"
The voice continued. "Though insane,
Your wedded wife, whate'er befall,
Still lives, confined at Thornfield Hall,
With water on the brain!"
The clergy doffed their stoles and copes.
All shattered lay my dreams and hopes!

The charge was true. Alas! I knew
How false had been my lover's vows,
When, at a kind of Private View,
He shyly introduced me to
His quarter-witted spouse.
(She tried to bite him in the chest,
Which did not make me less depressed.)

That night from Thornfield Hall I fled,
And roamed the country, far and wide,
Till I was rescued, nearly dead,
Supplied with lodging (board and bed)
And had my stockings dried,
By Mr. Rivers, of Marsh End,
A Missionary, but a friend.

But though, with an engaging air,
He gave me his religious views,
And then besought me to repair
To Mandalay with him, and there
Pervert a few Hindoos,
He could not lure me, with his arts,
To Propagate in Foreign Parts.

For I had heard that Uncle John,
Who long enjoyed the poorest health
(And whose decease I counted on),
To a Serener Clime had gone,
And left me all his wealth.
How could I change my single state,
To be a Missionary's mate?

An heiress now, to Thornfield Hall
My footsteps swiftly I retraced,
To find, ah me! no house at all!
The remnant of a ruined wall
About a smoking waste!
And, in the ashes of the fire,
No signs of lunatic or squire!

Canned Classics

The crumbling floors I quickly crossed,
And learnt (at an adjacent farm)
That Edward's accident had cost
His spouse her life, while he had lost
Both eyes and half an arm.
There, all among the pigs, he sat;
But I could tell him by his hat.

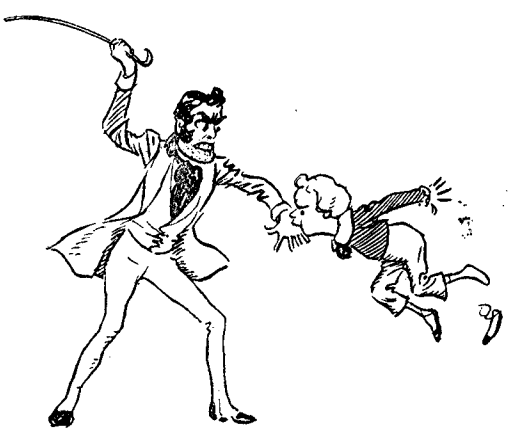
"Behold," he cried, "a broken man!'
(He had indeed mislaid some limbs)
"A Might-have-been, an Also-ran,
A Remnant——" Just as he began
To grope for synonyms,
I clasped him firmly to my breast.
Dear Reader, you can guess the rest!

No. III.—DAVID COPPERFIELD

(After Charles Dickens)

As an infant I was known as "little Davy"
To my mother, who, a widow, lived alone,
And to Peggotty, our confidential slavey,
The most perfect of domestics ever known.
I was rosy-cheeked and plump and curly-headed,
And enjoyed myself as only children can,
Till—a thing I'd often dreaded—Mother rashly went and wedded
Mr. Murdstone, a most unattractive man,
Who reproved her till she nearly lost her few remaining senses,
And would punish me severely for the paltriest offences.

Mr. Murdstone had no reason to illtreat me,
Since by nature I was timid as a mouse;
But I happened once to bite him when he beat me,
So he sent me off to school at Salem House.



Canned Classics

Though the prospect of departure had dismayed me,
I became much less disconsolate and sore
When the carter who conveyed me—Mr. Barkis—begged and prayed me
To be sure that he was "willing"—no one more;
And I gathered that this carrier was of Peggotty enamoured,
Though her coldness was a barrier upon which he vainly hammered.

Mother died when I was nine. Devoid of pity,
Mr. Murdstone from my studies brought me back,
And employed me in his warehouse in the City,
Where I laboured, late and early, like a black.
With a person named Micawber I was boarded,
Who provided me with lodging, bite and sup;
Though the life was dull and sordid, much amusement he afforded,
By his faith in something better "turning up,"
As with ardour undiminished all his gods he would importune,
While his consort never finished giving hostages to Fortune!

Growing weary of the drudgery provided,
One fine morning, I resolved to run away
To my aunt, Miss Betsey Trotwood, who resided
Down at Dover; which I did without delay.
When I found her, with a lunatic connection,
Richard Babley—"Mr. Dick" as he was termed—
And she hailed me with affection and a promise of protection,
My most sanguine expectations were confirmed;
For though Murdstone came and claimed me, Aunt compelled him to retire,
And adopted and renamed me "Trotwood Copperfield, Esquire."

David Copperfield

Next I studied at a Canterbury college,
Where with academic learning I was stodged,
And some fragments I acquired of legal knowledge
At the lawyer's, Mr. Wickfield's, where I lodged.
He'd a daughter, known as Agnes, fair of feature,
And an office-boy, Uriah Heep, by name,
An unhealthy kind of creature who aspired to try and reach her—
An ambition that he didn't dare proclaim,—
And who spoke without cessation in a soft and slimy mumble,
And with tiresome iteration would maintain that he was "'umble."

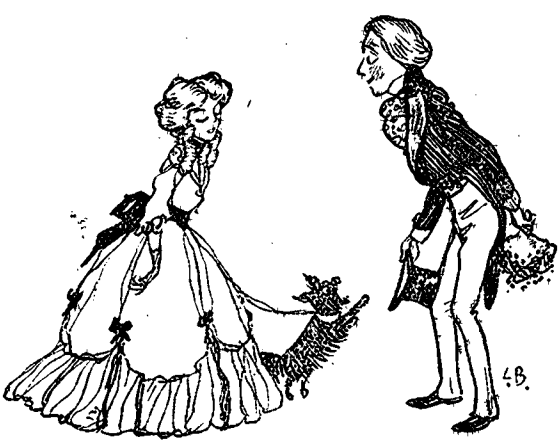
It was now, I think, or else a trifle later,
That with Steerforth, an old schoolmate, I fell in.
(Salem House had been our common *Alma Mater*,
Ere the whiskers started sprouting on my chin.)
Ever ready for a revel or a rollick,
He would view my simple artlessness with scorn,
But we shared in many a frolic that was frankly alcoholic,
And we often split a headache in the morn,
Till (the metaphor is novel), falling headlong
in the gravy,
We brought shame into the hovel of poor
Peggotty, the slavey.

I had often stayed with Peggotty's relations,
Down at Yarmouth, in the boat-house
where they dwelt,
Where in lobsters, crabs and similar crustaceans,
Mr. Peggotty professionally dealt.

Canned Classics

Of connections he supported half a dozen:
Little Emily his niece, and Ham his son
(Who was always busy buzzin,' like a bee, around his cousin,
Whose ingenuous affections he had won);
Widow Gummidge, too, he kept there, to his kindness much beholden,
And this "lone lorn creetur" wept there, when she thought about
"the old 'un."

To this humble but contented little party
Mr. Steerforth I unwisely introduced.
Mr. Peggotty was hospitably hearty;
Mrs. Gummidge, too, her tide of tears unloosed.
Little Em'ly, though, grew wan, and daily wanner.
But we never guessed the reason why she moped,
Till we learnt of the dishonour that my friend had brought upon her,
When at length with one another they eloped,
And escaped together neatly, in the Continental fashion,
Leaving Ham "cut up" completely, and his father white with passion.



I meanwhile upon the legal seas had ventured,
Where I launched my frail and solitary barque,
Being articled and formally indentured
To the firm of Spenlow Jorkins, as a clerk.
Mr. Spenlow had a fascinating daughter,
Whom I promptly fell in love with, on the spot,

And when bouquets I had bought her, and sufficiently besought her,
She agreed that she would share my little lot.
With delight I was demented at my Dora's sweet compliance,
When she readily consented to so humble an alliance.

But alas! when Mr. Spenlow was run over
By a wagon, I was terribly distressed;
And still more so when the news arrived from Dover
That my aunt had lost what money she possessed.
But my sorrow reached its final culmination
When my child-wife, darling Dora, took and died,
From internal inflammation (with some minor complication)
Which proved fatal to my little one's inside.
(As, dear Reader, much affected, for your handkerchief you rummage,
You may picture me dejected and as "lorn" as Mrs. Gummidge.)

To return to little Em'ly and her lover;
When the former saw what mischief she had wrought,
And was granted the occasion to discover
That her Steerforth wasn't all her fancy thought,
She eluded the attention of this bounder,
And to London unexpectedly returned,
Where old Peggotty, who found her, threw forgiving arms around her,
When her penitent appearance he discerned,
As with rapturous elation (which he found it hard to smother),
He suggested emigration to some Colony or other.

Canned Classics

It was stormy on the morning of their sailing,
But I hastened down to Yarmouth, to the docks,
Where I found a perfect hurricane prevailing,
And a vessel drifting helpless on the rocks.
How we cheered when Ham courageously insisted
Upon swimming with a life-line to the wreck,
With a rope around him twisted! As he boarded her she listed,
And he fell into the sea and broke his neck;
And, as vainly with hot toddy and such stimulants we plied him,
Came a wave and cast a body—that of Steerforth!—up beside him!

Little Em'ly and her kinsfolk, sorely smitten,
Booked their passage to some Australasian State,
Where old Peggotty became a Greater Briton,
And where even Mrs. Gummidge found a mate.
As for me: not long a widower I tarried,
But imploring Agnes Wickfield for her hand,
I was very soon remarried, ev'ry obstacle I parried,
And became the greatest author in the land,
So that Publishers who viewed me as "that promising young writer"
Were persuaded to include me in each *Popular Reciter*.

No. IV.—VANITY FAIR

(After W. M. Thackeray)

Miss Pinkerton of Hammersmith was noted far and wide
As the head of a scholastic institution,
Where the minds of English maidens were instructed and supplied
With Geography and French and Elocution.
They were taught to work at "samplers," to Recite and Play the Harp,
And do other things, if possible, more deadly;
And among them dwelt that scapegrace Miss Rebecca (Becky) Sharp,
And that angel Miss Amelia (Emmie) Sedley.

Little Emmie was a paragon; she seldom stole or lied,
She was good—if not particularly witty—
And she lived in Russell Square (upon the fashionable side)
With her father who was "something in the City."
She'd an elder brother, Joseph, a most consequential ass,
Who with dollars was abundantly provided,
But whose manner was so stiff that it recalled the "Pompous Grass"
Of that Province of Bengal where he resided.

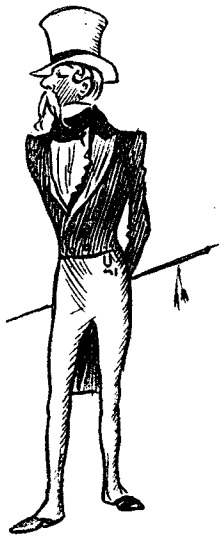
Canned Classics

Becky's father was an artist, but a lack of food and pence
Made him perish (somewhat aptly) on a *pallet*,
While his wife, who also painted—but in quite another sense—
Was a dancer in (forgive my rhyme) the ballet!
From her childhood little Becky had no fondness for the Truth,
Ev'ry promise was as brittle as a pie-lid,
And she added to the natural infirmities of Youth
A disreputable twinkle of the eyelid!

If her parents' brief existence had been anything but tame,
Hers was equally predestined to be squally,
When she bade farewell to Chiswick, and a governess became
In the service of a baronet named Crawley.
He was mean and old and ugly, and possessed that form of wit
Which with liquor shows a tendency to broaden;
He'd a pair of youthful daughters, and an heir whose name was Pitt,
And a younger son, a profligate, called Rawdon.

When his wife succumbed one day to an inflammatory chill,
Ere her corpse to the necropolis was carried,
He suggested that the governess her vacant place should fill,
And proposed that he and Becky should get married.
If the latter's flat refusal came as something of a jar,
He had even greater cause to get excited
When he learnt that she and Rawdon, by the local Registrar,
Had but recently been secretly united!

Vanity Fair



Rawdon Crawley was a Captain in a Regiment of Guards
—A most laudable if leisurely existence—
And by gambling on the race-course, or at billiards, or at cards,
He contrived to keep the bailiffs at a distance.
But this connoisseur of women, of champagne and cigarettes,
Found the matrimonial outlook rather chilling,
When he started with a governess to live upon his debts,
And his father cut him off without a shilling.

In the lack of cash, however, he by no means was unique;
We may note another instance, more affecting:
Mr. Sedley, Emmie's father, who, in less than half a week,
Lost the fortune he had spent his life collecting.
(Such a failure was undoubtedly most difficult to bear,
But it needn't have astonished or upset him
That the friends he had so often entertained in Russell Square
Should invariably cut him when they met him.)

Emmie Sedley had two lovers. While the first she much adored,
—Captain Osborne (George), a soldier by profession—
By the second, Captain Dobbin, she was often greatly bored;
His society would fill her with depression.
Now the former was a flirt—though she considered him a god—
But he loved her in his superficial fashion,
While the latter simply worshipped ev'ry inch of ground she trod,
But was silent on the subject of his passion.

Canned Classics

Mr. Osborne, George's father, when he heard of Sedley's fall,
Unaccustomed to be treated with defiance,
Said that marriage with a pauper wouldn't suit his son at all,
And declined to acquiesce in the alliance.
So when George and Emmie married—which they did with Dobbin's aid—
His anathemas were passionate and many,
And all mention of their brother to his daughters he forbade,
As he cut his son adrift without a penny.

In the meantime things had happened which set Europe in a blaze,
And resulted in a series of collisions,
When Napoleon collected all the troops that he could raise
To withstand the Duke of Wellington's divisions.
And when England's best and bravest to the seat of war were sent,
To indulge in sundry sanguinary orgies,
Becky hastened off to Belgium with her Rawdon's regiment;
Little Emmie, too, accompanied her George's.

Thus we find our friends assembled, on the eve of Waterloo,
At a party which a Duchess gave in Brussels,
Where (as Byron says) the handsomest of woman were on view,
And the men were all distinguished for their muscles.
Here poor Emmie, much neglected, feeling lonely and forlorn,
Listened absently while Dobbin dully jawed on,
And her husband flirted recklessly, from midnight until morn,
In an alcove, with that horrid Mrs. Rawdon.

Vanity Fair

If a storm of disappointment made poor Emmie's bosom swell,
This was soon to be transformed into a blizzard,
When, next day, her faithless husband on the field of battle fell,
With the bullet of a Frenchman through his gizzard.
Little Em was brokenhearted, as the Reader may suppose,
And returned in haste to London on the morrow,
Where her baby-boy (who, luckily, had got his father's nose)
Proved the only mitigation of her sorrow.

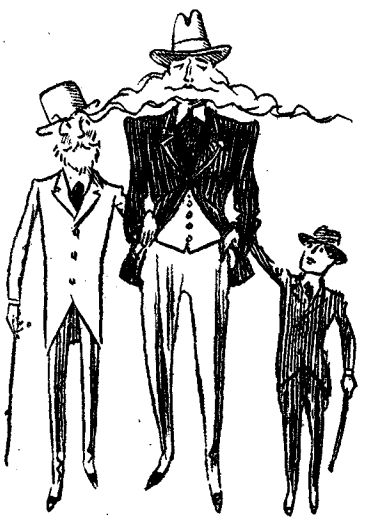
When the troops returned to England, at the close of the campaign,
And the Crawleys came to London for the season,
Becky's passionate flirtation with a nobleman named Steyne
Set the gossips' tongues a-wagging—and with reason.
And when Rawdon caught her supping—when she thought him far away—
With a marquis of such doubtful reputation,
Putting two and two together, with the very least delay,
He applied for a Judicial Separation.

Canned Classics

Little Becky's day was over. To the Continent she fled,
Where she toured from one Casino to another,
With that fat conceited dolt (of whom already we have read),
Joseph Sedley, Emmie's wealthy elder brother.
As for Emmie—Father Time erased the wrinkles from her brows,
And her tears were soon converted into laughter,
When her dear devoted Dobbin she consented to espouse:
And we'll hope that they "lived happy ever after"!

No. V.—TRILBY

(After George du Maurier)



In a Quarter of Paris—the Quarter called Latin—
Whose morals make poor Mrs. Grundy feel faint,
In an attic well suited for swinging a cat in,
Three Englishmen studied to paint.
There was Wynne, known as Taffy, as tough as a faggot,
And Sandy McAllister, Laird of Cockpen,
To say nothing of Little Billee (William Bagot),
Three very attractive young men;
And the Quarter would flock to their goodly-sized garret,
To talk, or to fence, or to sample their claret.

Of the artists they met in this fashion informal,
A Jewish pianist, Svengali by name,
Had a musical talent so rare and abnormal
It burnt in his breast like a flame.
He was clapped and encored, he was cheered to the echo,
So skilled and adroit a performer was he,
When he joined with a fiddler whose surname was Gecko
In Schubert's Concerto in B.
And the Laird would exclaim, "He's a wonder, by Juno!"
Whenever he played a selection from Gounod.

Canned Classics

Svengali was really a poisonous fellow,
Whose aspect betrayed his Hebraic descent,
For his nose it was hooked, his complexion was yellow,
And nought upon washing he spent.
His uncanny brown eyes gave companions the fidgets
Who chanced to encounter their sinister glance,
And with passes mesmeric his vulture-like digits
Could put people into a trance;
And he thus drove a headache, one day, from the noddle
Of Trilby O'Ferrall, that popular model.

Now Trilby was one of the loveliest creatures
That any art-student in Paris had viewed;
She would frequently pose for particular features,
And sometimes she sat for the nude.
In her youth she had come an unfortunate cropper
—A thing that may happen to any young wench—
But though Britons would doubtless have deemed her improper,
"*Que voulez-vous donc?*" said the French.
If they knew of her failing they freely forgave it,
And pardoned her faults *quia multum amavit!*

If her heart was enormous, her feet they were tiny;
Her carriage how graceful, how perfect her poise!
While her eyes were as bright as the stars and as shiny,
Her hair was cut short like a boy's;
But her soul was completely deficient of music,
And though she would warble "Ben Bolt," now and then,

Trilby

Of her hearers such singing would make not a few sick,
They frequently bolted (like Ben)
When she gave her idea—with her back to an easel—
Of "Pop goes the Queen" or of "God save the weasel."

When Little Billee fell in love with this Trilby,
His mother was filled with the deepest despair;
"Oh, tut, tut," murmured old Mrs. Bagot, "what *will* be
The end of this dreadful affair?"
So to Paris she straightway proceeded to toddle,
And argued her case with such deftness and skill,
That she quickly persuaded the warm-hearted model
To break her engagement with Bill,
And to leave all her friends in the Quarter behind her,
And flee where no lover could follow or find her.

Poor Little Billee grew as thin as a maggot,
While vainly he sought for the girl of his choice,
And although as he languished and pined, Mrs. Bagot,
With permanent tears in her voice,
Would attempt to distract him with grapes or with jelly,
Explaining that models were plenteous and cheap,
Or with works of some oldfashioned Caine or Corelli
Endeavoured to read him to sleep,
Her behaviour to Trilby continued to rankle;
He longed for the sight of one slim little ankle.

Years pass, till our trio in Paris one summer,
Hear tell of a singer, just billed to appear,

And her name, "La Svengali," recalls that old strummer
Whom once 'twas their habit to cheer;
So they go to the concert and listen with stupor
To singing no angel could hope to eclipse,
And the Laird is so moved that he swears like a trooper,
While Taffy grows pale to the lips;
As for Bagot—how mixed must the feelings of Bill be,
Who in "La Svengali" identifies Trilby!

It seems that Svengali, by methods mesmeric,
Had gained and established a psychic control
And was married (though not, I believe, by a cleric)
To Trilby O'Ferrall, poor soul!
I can never pretend to explain the whole question,
Nor show whence such forces may happen to spring,
But I know that somehow, by hypnotic suggestion,
Svengali had taught her to sing,
Till her voice, which before had been tuneless and weeny,
Resembled the organ of Miss Tetrazzini.

To London they came, and one day at rehearsal,
Svengali, who relished occasional rows,
Lost his temper and rudely proceeded to curse all
The band—not to mention his spouse!
He continued to browbeat and bully and rag her,
Till Gecko (who now was his first violin)
Got annoyed with his leader, and drew out a dagger
And made a huge hole in his skin;
And Svengali gave vent to an ear-piercing bellow,
And fell with his head through the violoncello.

That night, ere the curtain went up at old Drury,
Another conductor they had to engage,
And Svengali, half-mad with annoyance and fury,
Was propped in a box by the stage;
And when Trilby appeared (in a trance cataleptic)
The orchestra played an encouraging bar,
But she uttered a wail like a very dyspeptic
Old goat with a chronic catarrh;
She emitted a moan like a muzzled retriever,
She shrieked like a jay with a touch of hay-fever.

With hisses and howls, to express disapproval,
The audience urged her at once to refrain,
They demanded the singer's immediate removal,
And asked for their money again.
So the manager hastened to look for her master
(While Trilby continued to moo like an ox),

Canned Classics

And discovered—a still more appalling disaster—
Svengali stone-dead in his box!
And a wag in the pit, with a squint and a red-head,
Remarked that deceased was a typical "dead-head"!

Svengali defunct, his unfortunate victim,
Poor Trilby, succumbed very soon to the shock,
While the First Violin whose stiletto had prick'd him
Was haled to the criminal dock;
But although in his coffin the wizard was lying,
His sway over Trilby survived, off and on,
And the sight of his photograph caused her, when dying,
To chant like a moribund swan,
So that when at the end on her deathbed she lay flat,
She sang an Impromptu by Chopin (in *A* flat).

When Trilby departed, so sorely he missed her
That Little Billee took a fever and died,
And a week or two later, his favourite sister
By Taffy was claimed as a bride;
While old Sandy McAllister married a neighbour—
A braw Lowland lassie who lived in Dundee—
And poor Gecko was given six months with hard labour,
And afterwards died of D.T.
And 'tis thus that my tale of hypnotic collusion
Is brought to a fitting but mournful conclusion.

No. VI.—THREE WEEKS

(After Mrs. Elinor Glyn)

When Paul Verdayne was twenty-two,
His hair was fair, his eyes were blue,
More lithe was he than kangaroo,
    Than lark or cricket merrier;
His chest was square, his waist was spare,
He loved fresh air and simple fare,
But most of all he seemed to care
    For "Pike," his small fox-terrier.
On ev'ry inch of Paul was written
The trademark of the trueborn Briton.

One day his parents gave a snort,
When some one brought the strange report
That Paul was busy paying court
    To Isabella Waring;
A humble parson's daughter she,
Unfit for such a man as he.
His mother sniffed and said, "Dear me!"
    His father started swearing:
"Tut, tut!" he cried; "Oh, hang and blazes!"
And used some even stronger phrases.

Canned Classics

The knots that bound the artless Paul,
As Isabella's willing thrall,
His friends and relatives were all
    Most anxious to unravel,
And so they cunningly combined
To make him leave his love behind
And go abroad and steep his mind
    In Continental travel,
And thus, perchance, be cured of caring
For poor Miss Isabella Waring.

At dinner, in a Swiss hotel,
Paul did himself extremely well,
For though he missed—I needn't tell—
    The offspring of the Vicar,
He was not altogether deaf
To the allurements of the *chef*,
And drank his pint of St. Estèphe
    And quarts of stronger liquor,
Until he felt extremely jolly
And ripe for any form of folly.

So, when a lady, tall but slight,
With raven hair, as black as night,
And skin of a magnolia white,
    And lips like a geranium,
Sat down at an adjacent seat,

And sipped Tokay and quaffed Lafitte,
Paul's youthful pulse more quickly beat,
The blood flew to his cranium.
When waiters hailed her as "Your Highness,"
His throat was parched with sudden dryness.

That night, with features pale and drawn,
He paced the lawn, from ten to dawn,
Till (just as he began to yawn)
He heard this siren calling.
When to her rooms he hastened in
And found her, clad in something thin,
Full length upon a tigerskin
Indelicately sprawling,
Her lines he could not help comparing
With those of the rotund Miss Waring.

Madame Zalenska—'twas the name
She travelled under—knew no shame,
And very quickly overcame
Poor Paul's old-fashioned scruples;
She took him on the lake for tea,
She perched or nestled on his knee,
And when at last he grew to be
The most adroit of pup'ls,
They spent a week, in lovely weather,
Upon the Burgenstock together.

Canned Classics

To Venice, later on, they hied,
Where all conventions they defied,
And lived contented, side by side,
Until, one dismal morning,
The luckless Paul was left alone;
He woke to find his lady flown
To some address, alas! unknown,
Without a word of warning!
Vain were his efforts to retrieve her,
And so he promptly had brain fever.

Years passed. Though to his loss resigned,
Poor Paul grew thin, and peeked and pined,
But little comfort could he find
In giving "Pike" an airing;
And though he fished and golfed and bowled,
These pastimes left him more than cold,
Nor was he in the least consoled
By Isabella Waring.
When playing cricket or lawn-tennis,
His thoughts would still revert to Venice.

No present pleasures could eclipse
The mem'ry of those foreign trips
With one who joined vermilion lips
To eyes like a chameleon;
He never laughed, he seldom smiled,

Three Weeks

Each day that slowly past him filed
Fresh sorrows on his spirit piled,
Like Ossa upon Pelion,
Until the postman brought a letter,
And, of a sudden, he grew better.

Inspired anew with boundless hope,
He ceased at once to mourn or mope,
Caught up the foreign envelope
And tore it open quickly;
With all his senses in a swirl,
He thence proceeded to unfurl
A lock of hair—a baby's curl!
And oh! the tears fell thickly!
A blush his manly forehead mantling,
He kissed this fragment of his bantling.

The clue was clear, the scent was hot;
He hastened in his father's yacht
To that secluded seagirt spot
Where the Zalenska tarried;
But woe is me! he came too late!
His darling met a cruel fate,
Slain by the vicious potentate
Whom she in youth had married,
And who, although no *censor morum*,
Deplored her life of indecorum.

Canned Classics

My tale is done. The king was slain,
While Paul had soft'ning of the brain,
On being planted once again
    In this forlorn position.
For months, with a demented grin,
He sat upon a tigerskin,
Reading the works of Mrs. Glyn
    (The Bowdlerised Edition)
To baby Paul, who—none the wiser—
Succeeded to the throne as kaiser.

No. VII.—IVANHOE

(After Sir Walter Scott)

The Lady Rowena at Rotherwood dwelt,
With her guardian, old Cedric the Saxon.
Her figure was slim, what the French would term *svelte*
(She was seventeen inches—no more—round the belt),
And her skin was transparently waxen;
She'd a mouth like a rose, and an aquiline nose,
And her lips, I suppose, would in smiling disclose
Little regular rows, just as white as the snows,
Of the thirty-two teeth that were gleaming beneath,
Like a dagger that glistens when drawn from its sheath;
And her hair it was fairer than flaxen.
So that Wamba, the Jester and merchant of mirth,
Quite agreed with his colleague, a swineherd named Gurth,
That he never had seen a young thing like Rowena,
So sweet of demeanour, so noble of birth,
And in virtue and worth quite the salt of the earth.
But although her appearance suggested romances,
And knights would assail her with amorous glances,
And courted and wooed her, whenever they viewed her,
In vain with their passionate looks they pursued her;

Canned Classics

She snubbed their advances, at banquets and dances,
And showed them quite plainly how poor were their chances,
Her heart being set on a youth who had vanished,
Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe, recently banished
(For reasons I never was able to gather)
By Cedric, his rather irascible father.

One night when the latter sat down with his suite
To the meal they partook of together,

Four strangers arrived at the postern, dead-beat,
With the dampest of feet, and requested a seat
At the family board, and called loudly for meat
And for shelter from wind and from weather.
There was first de Bois Guilbert (best known as Sir Brian),
Who came from Jerusalem (also called Zion),
A Knight of the Temple, as brave as a lion,
But apt to get drunk, and a bit of a skunk;
For his conduct was vicious, his manners pernicious,

Which made his acquaintances justly suspicious,
And friends who were wary grew sensibly chary
Of packing their boots in this nobleman's trunk.
After him followed Aylmer, a militant Prior;
And then came a Hebrew financier (and liar)
Named Isaac of York, whose aversion to pork
Could be seen if you gave him a piece on a fork.
Last of all came a Pilgrim whom nobody knew
(He was not to be found in the local "Who's Who?"),
For he shrouded his features from all fellow-creatures,
And kept them concealed from the popular view.
But to welcome them warmly old Cedric decided,
And showed them a room where their hair could be tidied;
A banquet provided, at which he presided,
And then to their couches his visitors guided.

That night, when the Jew was asleep in his bed,
Came the Pilgrim and stealthily woke him:
"Take heed of the danger that threatens your head,
And escape while you may, brother Isaac," he said,
In the midriff proceeding to poke him.
"There are foes in this house you have reason to dread,
Who believe you'd be very much pleasanter dead,
So beware lest you tread in the net they have spread!"
All the colour from Isaac's complexion had fled,
As he heard of these persons, so rude and illbred,
Who were anxious to throttle and choke him.
As the loss of his life was a thing he abhorred,
He at once took to flight, and, by way of reward,
With expressions of fervour, he gave his preserver

Canned Classics

A new suit of armour, a lance, and a sword,
Such as Pilgrims can seldom (if ever) afford,
And a thoroughbred charger, high mettled and larger
Than any that ambled or pawed on the sward
Of that Tournament-ground (whither either was bound),
Where at Ashby-la-Zouche, for its tourneys renowned,
All the knighthood of England was soon to be found.

To Ashby-la-Zouche all Society came,
To assist at the Tournament held there;
And Sir Brian Bois Guilbert earned laurels and fame,
So alert was his eye, so precise was his aim,
That of ev'ry opponent with ease he made game,
And all rival assailants repelled there;
Till there hove into sight an Anonymous Knight,
Who refused to confess to a name or address,
But immediately challenged Sir Brian to fight,
And who started to smite, with his main and his might,
Till he put the proud Templar completely to flight,
And a score of competitors felled there.
And next day he came back, with a Knight dressed in Black,
And together they made a concerted attack,
And they cracked like a filbert the skull of Bois Guilbert,
And stretched each antagonist flat on his back.
The Anonymous Knight then as victor was crowned
(But his colleague in sable could nowhere be found),
And his hand it was grasped, and his helmet unclasped,
And old Cedric in breathless astonishment gasped,

When he saw that the youth who had triumphed that day
Was the son he had cruelly driven away,
While the ladies exclaimed, "What a gallant young varlet!"
And Lady Rowena blushed pink and then scarlet.

Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe spent the week-end
With the Jew and his exquisite daughter;
Rebecca her name was, her beauty a blend
Of the Hebrew and Greek, and she loved to befriend
The young gallant her father had brought her.
But alas! as on Monday they journeyed along,
Came a party of cut-throats, a score or so strong,
And contrived to surround them, and beat them and bound them,
—Behaviour unmannerly, not to say wrong.
And the list of their captives continued to swell,
When a similar fate very shortly befell
Father Cedric, and Lady Rowena as well.

Canned Classics

Now the scoundrels who plotted this dastardly trap
Were Sir Reginald Front-de-Boeuf (My! what a chap!)
And Sir Maurice de Bracy, a boor, rude and racy,
Who wanted Rowena to sit on his lap;
And Sir Brian Bois Guilbert, who worshipped the daughter
Of Isaac of York, and who thought if he caught her
And caged her awhile, like a dove or a pigeon,
She soon would be gracing his board, and embracing
Not only himself, but his Christian religion.

Now Wamba and Gurth (whom I've mentioned before),
When they heard of this fearful disaster,
By their grandparents' whiskers most solemnly swore
That a way they would pierce through Sir Reginald's door,
And that Lady Rowena should languish no more
In the castle with Cedric their master.
So they got on the track of that knight dressed in black,
Whom they found and conducted triumphantly back,
And once more he arranged a successful attack,
And old Cedric he rescued, and Ivanhoe too,
And released that old reprobate, Isaac the Jew,
And the Lady Rowena uninjured he drew
From the cell where De Bracy had cast her;
And he captured or slew the contemptible crew
Who had bitten off more than their molars could chew,
And who terrified grew, later on, when they knew
That the knight who dispersed them and managed to worst them
Was nobody less than King Richard the First,
Who for fighting displayed an unquenchable thirst.

But Sir Brian escaped from the general slaughter,
Abducted Rebecca, the infidel's daughter,
And straight to the Templars' Preceptory brought her,
Where orthodox views, as he hoped, might be taught her.

The Knights of the Temple, however, were shocked
At the turn things appeared to be taking;
And Rebecca at once in a dungeon they locked,
And proceeded her sentence of death to concoct,
And condemned her to perish by baking.
So they chained her with care to a chair in the square,
And her *auto-dà-fé* they commenced to prepare,
Though she wore such an air of pathetic despair
That the hearts of the hardest were aching;
But a Trial by Combat she cleverly claimed,
And the Templars, their passions aroused and inflamed,
As their own representative tactlessly named
Poor Sir Brian Bois Guilbert, who, somewhat ashamed,
And a trifle irate, sallied forth to await
Any knight who would fight to determine the fate
Of the maiden his colleagues proposed to cremate.
On his charger he sate, on the specified date,
When her Champion approached the Preceptory gate,
And he felt quite unmanned as the figure he scanned
Of Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe, falchion in hand.
Now he scarcely had planned, his attack to withstand,
And had thrown off his cloak (He was hectic, poor bloke!)
When he started to stutter and splutter and choke,
Had a seizure (or stroke) and a blood-vessel broke,
And he never again moved a muscle nor spoke!

Canned Classics

So Sir B. was deceased, and Rebecca released,
And the schemes of the Templars miscarried,
And Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe's joy was increased
When he summoned a priest, and arranged for a feast,
And to Lady Rowena was married.
While Rebecca, as soon as she found herself free,
With her father, old Isaac, set sail o'er the sea,
And retired to a land where unfortunate He-
Brews are neither maltreated nor harried.
And to-day their descendants return to our shores,
And are busy repaying Rebecca's old scores,
And can truthfully boast that the Christians they "roast,"
And in matters financial have got them "on toast."

* * * * * *

Gentle Reader, thus far if your way you have wended,
And followed my story romantic and splendid
(Of passion and chivalry equally blended),
If by its prolixity bored or offended,
Regard as defaulter, not me but Sir Walter,
Whose tale I decline to abridge or to alter;
And though to inordinate length 'tis extended,
Be grateful at least that at last it is ended!

No. VIII.—UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

(After Mrs. H. B. Stowe)

On a beautiful plantation, in the State of Old Kentucky,
Mr. Shelby lived in comfort, with a negro retinue,
But a business speculation having chanced to prove unlucky,
He resolved that he must sell a slave or two.
He had bargained almost daily, with a dealer (name of Haley),
But it fell upon his household like an unexpected bomb,
When the purchaser selected, from the servants he inspected,
That most faithful of domestics, Uncle Tom.
There were lumps, just like carbuncles, under all those niggers' collars,
As they saw the best of uncles thus converted into dollars.

Not content, it seems, to carry off this bargain for his guineas,
Mr. Haley coaxed and argued, till at last he was allowed
To include a coon called Harry who, of all the piccaninnies,
Was the one of whom the Shelbys were most proud.
But Eliza (Harry's mother) managed, somehow or another,
To abstract him from the clutches of this predatory brute;
Though he tracked her to a torrent, with his bloodhounds and a warrant,
She successfully eluded all pursuit,
So maternally devoted that she crossed, without a quiver,
On the blocks of ice that floated down the semi-frozen river.

Canned Classics

With the aid of certain Quakers (kindly folk, in my opinion),
Poor Eliza found a refuge, in a little wooden shack,
In that land of many acres which is known as "The Dominion,"
Where they don't object to persons being black.
Here she toiled with vim and vigour till her spouse (another nigger)
Came to join her—on escaping from a brutal master's thrall,
And this couple lion-hearted in a model laundry started,
And became the richest coons in Montreal,
To discover with a thrill (because it seemed to them so funny)
How that "Britons never will be Slaves"—to anything but money!

Uncle Tom, meanwhile, and Haley, feeling sad and rather chippy,
Were proceeding to the market where the first was to be sold,
In a boat which paddled gaily down the peaceful Mississippi,
With a cargo of black cattle in the hold.
When a fellow-trav'ller's daughter tumbled off into the water,
(She was known as Little Eva—Miss Evangeline St. Clare),
Uncle Tom leapt in and seized her, which so tickled her and pleased her
That she made her father buy him, then and there.
Mr. Haley named his figure—quite a fancy valuation—
And the planter bought the nigger, at his daughter's instigation.

Tom was happy for the present, 'mid surroundings sympathetic,
And he gained the highest praise of his employers, the St. Clares,
For his work was light and pleasant, he was keen and energetic,
He was sober, and he always said his pray'rs.
Though at times his mind reverted to the wife he had deserted,
And the countless sons and daughters he had left in Old Kentuck,

Uncle Tom's Cabin

And his heart grew soft and doughy, when he thought of poor Aunt Chloë,
He was not devoid of patience and of pluck,
And when musing, none too brightly, on relations at a distance,
He would read the Scriptures nightly, which he found of great assistance.

In St. Clare's suburban *château* Uncle Tom remained contented,
Finding favour with his fellow-slaves, with Rosa the quadroon,
And with Adolph, the mulatto, overdressed and strongly-scented,
And with Topsy, that incorrigible coon.
What a tiny imp of Satan, with a wig no comb could straighten,
And a fund of quiet scorn which on her elders she bestowed!
When they sought some explanation for the fact of her Creation,
She insisted she had not been born—she'd "growed"!
She'd a talent for mendacity, a taste for double-dealing,
And an infinite capacity for picking and for stealing.

Things were looking fairly cheerful when severe indisposition
Laid Miss Eva low with fever, and confined her to her bed;
The anxiety was fearful, and the family physician
Merely pocketed his fee and shook his head.
Little Eva died (of dropsy), deeply mourned by Tom and Topsy,
And her father, shortly after, met a still more tragic end,
Being punctured by the dagger of a local carpet-bagger
Who mistook him, in a tavern, for a friend.
(If one *must* commit a murder—which is always fraught with danger—
There is nothing much absurder than to stab a total stranger!)

Canned Classics

When the household was disbanded—the result of this disaster—
Uncle Tom, who long had cherished certain hopes of getting free,
By an auctioneer was handed to a new and cruel master,
With the unalluring surname of Legree.
Now Legree was vile and vicious, he was low and avaricious,
And his slaves he starved and tortured till they perished by the score;
He would harass and maltreat them, he would brand and burn and beat them;
When they died, he merely sent and ordered more.
(I should need a dozen pages to delineate more fully
By what slow and shameful stages he became so base a bully.)

Tom felt anything but sprightly, with an owner so inhuman
Who had parasites (a couple) no less merciless than he,
And excused himself politely when required to flog a woman
Who had roused the savage temper of Legree.
Then those scoundrels, Sam and Quimbo, came along, with arms akimbo
And the most unpleasant grins upon their sycophantic lips,
And they tackled Tom together, and secured him with a tether,
And then tore his epidermis into strips.
Yes, they sliced him like a melon, with their fiendish flagellation;
But I don't propose to dwell on such a scene of degradation.

Shades of night were lightly falling on the fields of dripping cotton,
Tom was lying, slowly dying, on a cheerless outhouse floor,
When he heard a voice recalling happy days long since forgotten,
And he saw a well-known figure at the door.

How his heart beat fast and faster, as the son of his old master
(Mr. Shelby, of Kentucky) came and clasped him by the hand!
Even Sam displayed emotion, at the sight of such devotion;
Even Quimbo was a little bit unmanned!
But alas! before the morrow, Uncle Tom had gone to Glory,
And in sympathy and sorrow we must end this painful story.

* * * * * * *

If there *are* Infernal Regions, in the Land of the Hereafter
(That there *may* be, Gentle Reader, you will probably agree),
Surely Satan and his Legions must acclaim with shout and laughter
The arrival of such scoundrels as Legree.
Let us hope that Sam and Quimbo are confined somewhere in Limbo,
Where the labour is unceasing and the furnaces are hot,
Where a corner there may well be for the senior Mr. Shelby,
And where Haley, we may trust, is not forgot.
Let us leave them in that Underworld, where no one can regret them,
Where some day, I shouldn't wonder, Gentle Reader, if we met them!

OTHER VERSES

THE COMPLEAT SPORTSMAN

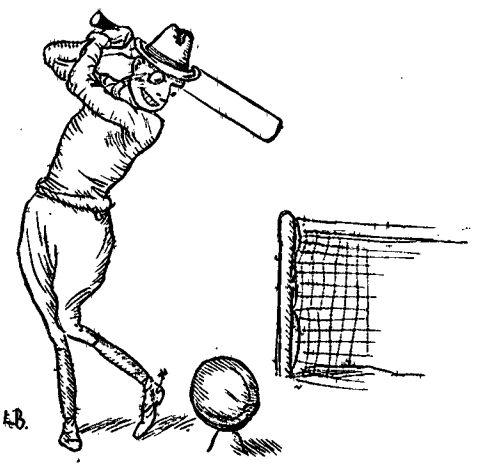
("I am not a sporting man," Lord Curzon is reported to have said. "I have never worn what is called the pigskin.")

You should see me, clad in pigskin, when the starter shouts, "Offside!"
And my filly takes the crupper in his teeth;
You should see me when, at Wimbledon, I chance to serve a "wide,"
You should see me wield the willow at Blackheath!
When I represent my County, in a foursome up at Lord's,
How the people cheer my famous "anchor-stroke,"
How the umpire blows his whistle when the scoring-board records
A revoke!
You should hear the cries of "Blimey!"
When the mob its joy evinces,
Ev'ry time I score a stymie
In the tennis-court at Prince's!

You should see me covert-shooting, with my rifle in my hand,
And my faithful pointer, Fido, at my heel;
You should see me stalking rabbits in the marshy meadow-land,
Or exploring misty mountain-tops for teal.
How I love to track the coot or capercailzie to his hole,
Or to listen to the pheasant's plaintive pipe,
As I sit beside the river with my fishing-rod, and troll
For a snipe,

Canned Classics

Or with catapult (discreetly
On my knees and elbows crawling)
Slay the snaffle that so sweetly
To the martingale is calling!



On the polo-field at Hurlingham I've made some record breaks,
At St. Andrews, too, I've carried out my bat;
I was *proxime accessit* in the Prince of Wales's Stakes,
And I won a dozen rubbers on the flat.
I would often do the hat-trick, in the days when I was young,
At regattas where they put me on to bowl,
And at pyramids or curling I could always pitch the bung
Through the goal.
In the nation's sporting annals
I have held my own unbeaten,
Since I won my croquet flannels
On the playing-fields at Eton!

SOUNDING THE TOXIN

(Milk from excited or irritated cows is, according to the latest scientific opinion, more harmful than that which contains disease germs. The blood of an excited animal throws out poisonous toxins that are most insalubrious.)

O Milkman, be candid and tell me, I pray,
If your wares are with toxins infected;
If Clara the cow, when you milked her to-day,
Was unruffled, sedate and collected.
Did she wake in a temper and scornfully laugh
At the short-horn who came from Strathpeffer?
Did she spurn the advances of Clarence the calf?
Did she quarrel with Hannah the heifer?
If so, to her produce no time I'll devote,
But rely for my tea upon Gilbert the goat.

O my Butcher, please state if Susannah the sow,
Whom you recently turned into bacon,
Wore a look of ineffable peace on her brow,
If her nerves were unstrung or were shaken.
Oh, had Oswald the ox, when you severed his tail,
Been a martyr to mental disquiet?
Was there anything known about Constance the quail
Which would make her unfit for my diet?
Pray explain, ere his ham on my platter I pile,
Whether Patrick the pig met his death with a smile.

Canned Classics

O, my Dairyman, tell me, I earnestly beg,
  Lest my prospects of breakfast be blighted,
Whether Hetty the hen, on evolving her egg,
  Was upset, overwrought or excited.
O my Grocer, bring news about Sam the sardine,
  When he swam as a child in the ocean,
Was his character tranquil, his outlook serene?
  Was he swayed by blind gusts of emotion?
For, if so, with a grief that is deep and acute,
I must really confine my attentions to fruit!

While the heart of Louisa the lettuce is dead,
  And can harbour no poisonous acid,
Clementina the cabbage, though losing her head,
  Is by nature proverbially placid,
And though the Bill the banana (whose coat one must strip)
  Provides suitable food for the glutton,
And Orlando the orange, though prone to "the pip,"
  Is more wholesome than Mildred the mutton,
Without fear of bacilli my tastes I may glut
Upon Percy the pumpkin and Norah the nut!

THE RUSTIC MUSE

("I have sometimes thought," writes Mr. Alfred Austin, in *The Times*, "that the pessimistic tenour of certain writers of verse, and the excessive sensuousness of others, sprang from their living, for the most part, in towns. My recipe for both would be 'Back to the land!'")

THE pessimistic bard to whom
  All inspiration is denied,
Should leave his small suburban room,
  And seek the country-side,
Where Nature loves in winter-time
To deck the very trees with *rime*.

In fields where Orpheus made his home
  No bard, however disso-lute
(With half-a-hundredweight of loam
  Attached to either boot),
Could call a spade a spade, ah, no!
Nor to the rake exclaim, "What hoe!"

Though yokels may be deemed uncouth,
  And cowmen thought "beyond the pail,"
By those whose Lexicon of Youth
  Knows no such word as "Flail,"
I love these clods of rustic mould;
If Peach is Silver, Silo's Gold!

Canned Classics

A mangel at the meadow's rim,
  Where Giles his ruthless harrow guides,
A simple wurzel is to him,
  And nothing much besides;
He drees his weird (or weirds his dree),
And oh, the deference to me!

I love to cull the buttercup,
  To watch hops hop, and snowdrops drop,
To plant my bulbs (the right way up)
  And make my fuchsias pop,
Like City men, to water stocks,
Or (like a shepherd) tend my phlox.

Then, fellow-poets, come away,
  By train or Tube or Underground,
Where Wordsworth, Tennyson and Gray
  Their inspiration found,
And Mr. Austin still pursues
His prototypes' elusive Muse.

THE SILENT CITY

("To the ears of our returning Australian . . . the truly remarkable thing is found to be not the noise of London, but its silence. Of course the words are comparative. The silence of London is not the silence of the Australian bush."—*The Times.*)

EVER since I left the vessel,
Spry and happy and contented,
And proceeded to the Cecil,
Where a bedroom I had rented,
I have suffered with acuteness
(I admit it seems a pity)
From the overwhelming muteness
Of this dumb and deathlike city.
Thishyer town is so much calmer
Than my ranche upon the Palmer.

Yes, the silence is appalling,
So depressing and so chilly;
Not a kangaroo is calling
To its mate in Piccadilly!
When I wander in Hyde Park, sir,
I grow homesick for the prairies,
Where you hear the dingo's bark, sir,
And the cries of cassowaries,
Where the pungent skunk is snarling
Round my shanty on the Darling.

Canned Classics

When I see Trafalgar Square, sir,
All my sighs are unavailing,
Not an emu rends the air, sir,
Not a wallaby is wailing!
All in vain I strive to combat
Disappointment and dejection,
Not a single tuneful wombat
Gives a musical selection;
But a hush, severe and solemn,
Seems to brood o'er Nelson's Column.

Motor-cars may hoot and rattle,
Motor-'buses growl and rumble;
They are naught to lowing cattle
And to bees that moan and mumble.
All your traffic, too, I'll warrant,
Roars in quite a minor key, sir,
Like a whisper to the torrent
Of the loud Murrumbidgee, sir!
So I wander, sick and ruffled,
In a city mute and muffled!

[It may interest readers to know that, when these verses appeared in *The Observer*, an indignant Australian wrote to point out that: (1) the terms "ranche" and "prairie" are unknown in Australia; (2) the dingo does not bark; (3) there are no cassowaries near the Darling; (4) the skunk does not exist in Australia; (5) the emu does not "rend the air"; (6) the wombat has no cry; (7) the reference to lowing cattle and moaning bees is absurd as applied to a cattle station homestead; (8) the Murrumbidgee is not a loud but a quiet river, hundreds of miles from the nearest cattle station.]

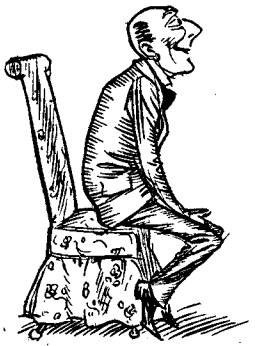
CREATURE COMFORTS

("What greater pleasure can there be to a private gentleman," says Carl Hagenback in his *Beasts and Men*, "than that of maintaining and establishing personal friendships with a collection of foreign animals?")

For years I led a dreary life!
The days passed slowly, one by one;
I fed the ducks, reproved my wife,
Played Handel's *Largo* on the fife,
Or gave the dog a run.
I neither realised nor knew
The pleasures of a private Zoo.

I never loved a dear gazelle,
To glad me with its soft black eye,
Nor ever to my lot it fell
To know a penguin really well,
Till, early last July,
I bought a small menagerie,
And oh! the difference to me!

Canned Classics



Now, when my spouse, perverse or cold,
Induces an attack of dumps,
I feel encouraged and consoled
When in their *manège* I behold
My camels' greater humps;
I fly from dear mamma-in-law
To Kate, my talkative macaw.

When statesmen's speeches are disgraced
By vulgar insults which denote
A lamentable lack of taste,
I seek my monkey-house in haste
To find an antidote;
I turn for manners to the lair
Of Bosco, my performing bear.

Those "lions" whom we *fête* and feed,
Heroes of sword or brush or pen,
Are they more dignified, indeed,
Than creatures of that nobler breed
Which decorate my den?
The more my fellow-men I view,
The more I love my private *Zoo*!

"JIG-SAW"

(THE PICTURE-PUZZLE CRAZE)

SEE how father bolts his meals!
At what lightning speed he guzzles,
Ere with hasty steps he steals
Off to cope with picture-puzzles!
Note how patiently he plays,
Though its knotty points afflict him,
When the fatal "jig-saw" craze
Claims him as its victim!
What excuse have we for saying
England's manhood is decaying?

Members of each West-end club,
Following the latest fashion,
Sacrifice both time and grub
To the picture-puzzle passion.
In the billiard-room they sit,
Heedless of the hour or weather,
And with knitted foreheads fit
Bits of wood together.
Are there people still complaining
That our sense of sport is waning?

Canned Classics

Men of ev'ry age and rank
  Join in this alluring hobby;
Partners "puzzle" at the Bank,
  Politicians in the Lobby.
In the barrack or the ship,
  Warriors share the same ambition,
To arrange a coloured chip
    In the right position,
Mouths of foreign critics muzzling
By their skill in "picture-puzzling."

Who shall talk of England's shame,
  For her frailties find excuses,
While we play this noble game,
  Put our talents to such uses?
While our Man and Womanhood—
  Father, mother, sister, brother—
Fit those little bits of wood
    Into one another,
Fellow Britons, we may surely
Sleep within our beds securely!

THE SERENADE

(Mr. Holbrooke, the eminent composer, who once wrote a serenade for fourteen tubas, has now written another which is scored for five saxophones, two sax-horns, an oboe and a corno-di-basetto.)

THE swain of old his ballad trolled,
In sentimental fashion;
On lyre, or lute, on fife or flute,
He voiced his nightly passion;
While Flora listened from her casement,
And Father cursed him in the basement.

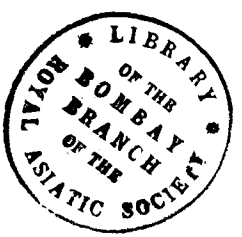
On gay guitar he thrummed a bar
From Braga's "Serenata";
He twanged a harp (his nails were sharp),
Or sang a soft Cantata;
To sound of dulcimer or gittern,
He cooed like some dyspeptic bittern.

No modern swain could pipe a strain
Which Flo would ever pardon;
His loud trombone, his xylophone,
His tuba and bombardon,
Would make a most unpleasant shindy
Beneath the lady's bedroom "windy."

Canned Classics

With tympani which rend the sky,
  Jew's-harps (from local Ghettos),
With ophicleids and shawms, besides
  Some corno-di-basettos,
His sweetheart's nerves he would disgruntle
With discords harsh and contrapuntal.

While Strauss's songs are scored for gongs,
  With cryptic orchestration,
Each modern *Op.* (forgive my "shop")
  Sounds like an operation;
Those instruments that bleat so queerly
Are instruments of torture, merely.



THE VACUUM CLEANER

(A Poem of Progress)

("Fond as I am of poetry," says Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the American poetess, "I can truly say that no epic ever impressed me so deeply, or so stirred my heart, as my first sight of a Vacuum Cleaner.")

Though Swinburne may sing like a siren,
And Tennyson trill like a thrush,
Though bachelors rave about Byron,
And girls over Longfellow gush,
No epic that critics can write of
Supplies a delight that is keener
Than that which I daily obtain from the sight of
A Vacuum Cleaner!

While lovers of music assemble
Each night at the Opera House,
To shudder, to thrill, or to tremble
At discords provided by Strauss,
Such orgies I savour the joys of,
At home, 'mid surroundings serener,
Where daily I hear the Elektra-like noise of,
The Vacuum Cleaner!

Canned Classics

The hedges with blossoms are laden,
The sunshine is bright up above,
And Spring to the youth and the maiden
Gives promise of laughter and love;
While birds, more triumphantly singing,
In meadows and woods growing greener,
Announce to us elders that April is bringing
The Vacuum Cleaner.

Though Time of "Old Masters" denude us,
Though strangers our treasures annex,
Though frauds and impostures delude us,
And counterfeits pain and perplex,
No fate that of Art would bereave us
Can ruffle our placid demeanour,
So long as Dame Fortune is willing to leave us
The Vacuum Cleaner!

THE SORROWS OF CRŒSUS

("A genius should not be wealthy," says Lord Rosebery, "or he is very likely to see his genius stifled by the fact.")

HAD I been shorn of wealth, when born,
What heights I might have scaled!
What deeds have done, what honours won,
Had poverty prevailed!
What laurels now would wreathe my brow,
What coronets my crest!
An M.V.O., for aught I know,
Might decorate my chest!
My fame might reach the highest pitch—
If only I were not so rich!

I should excel, I know it well,
In each domain of Art;
For I could fill, with grace and skill,
The great Caruso's part,
Perform like Tree (with one bent knee)
In true Shakesperian farce,
Or like Salome give a show
In garments thin and sparse.
Yes, I could sing like Little Tich—
If only I were not so rich!

Canned Classics

With camel-brush my oils I'd slush
  On canvas, inches thick;
The daubs I'd paint, with such restraint,
  Would make poor Poynter sick.
The public, awed, would loudly laud
  My quite colossal brains,
And, when I died, the Abbey wide
  Would welcome my remains!
My bust would fill some noble niche—
If only I were not so rich!

On battlefield I'd never yield,
  But die in the last ditch!
In private life I'd spoil my wife,
  And win the Dunmow flitch!
With magic pen my fellow-men,
  Like Caine, I would bewitch!
I'd run Dorando to a stand,
  And never feel a stitch!
My wagon to a star I'd hitch—
If only I were not so rich!

THE BLUE BOARD

(A number of clever literary and artistic women have taken up the idea of Maeterlinck's "Blue Bird" and banded themselves into a dining club, with one object, the pursuit of Happiness.)

BIRD of Blue, we daily wooed thee,
Shy as squirrel, fleet as fawn,
Followed, hunted and pursued thee,
Courted thee from dusk till dawn;
When we found thee,
Closing round thee,
Cunningly our nets we cast,
Caged and caught thee,
Bound and brought thee,
Captive, home at last.
Now, no longer myth nor fable,
Thou shalt deck our dinner-table!

Never more, in regions stellar,
Wilt thou wander far and free;
We have locked thee in the cellar,
And our butler keeps the key.
Females flocking,
Blue of stocking

Canned Classics

(Not the true teetotal hue!),
Lips bedewin'
With "Blue Ruin,"
Drink "till all is blue!"
To discover, if they're able,
Happiness—beneath the table!

Bird of Blue, 'neath pie-crust's cover,
We shall note thy pigeon's legs;
In the friendly guise of plover,
Thou shall yield reluctant eggs.
Grief shall finish,
"Blues" diminish,
As we gaily eat and drink,
And a niche in
Ev'ry kitchen
Honour Maeterlinck,
While that Belgian author's new book
Is for *cordons bleux* the Blue-book!

THE MEN FROM BLANKLEY'S

(Owing to the dearth of dancing men, says the *Daily Mirror*, hostesses are placed in a decided dilemma. The "entertainment manager" of a well-known firm of universal providers is, however, prepared to supply a score or so of dancing guests at few hours' notice.)

At Romford House the ball-room floor
  Mirrored a hostess somewhat flustered;
The débutantes around the door
  In mournful groups were clustered;
The band conversed in undertones,
  Their leader shrugged a scornful shoulder,
The draught about the chaperones
  Blew cold and ever colder;
The butler, on the stairs, grew pale,
He was, alas! the only male.

The rooms became as chill as vaults,
  Devoid of all but female dancers;
In vain the bandsmen played a waltz,
  A two-step and some Lancers.
The hostess, growing less alert,
  Secured an easy chair to nod on;
The maidens' waists remained ungirt,
  The matrons' toes untrod on;
Until the butler, with a groan,
Rushed headlong to the telephone.

Canned Classics

The clock struck two as from the street
  There rose a sound, sublime, seraphic:
The steady tramp of manly feet
  Above the roar of traffic!
And Blankley's troupe of well-trained guests,
  In clothes from Mr. Clarkson rented,
With "evening vests" whose low-cut chests
  Bore crimson 'kerchiefs, scented,
With carefully pomatum'd hair,
Ascended Lady Romford's stair!

Let poets tell how Roman geese
  Secured the Capitol from capture;
How Jason gained the Golden Fleece
  Let bards narrate with rapture.
Upon my tablets is engraved
  A deed more splendid still (and subtler),
Whereby the Romford ball was saved
    By Bellinger, the butler,
When Blankley nobly filled the breach
With guests at half-a-guinea each!

THE BUSY RICH

("It is impossible for a rich man to be idle," says Lord Kesteven. "The richer he is the harder he works.")

WHEN I had a hundred a year,
I led a most leisurely life;
All work I would shun, as I sat in the sun,
Where I whittled a stick with a knife.
In youth I was lazy and idle, I fear,
When I had a hundred, a hundred a year!

When I had five hundred a year,
My labours appeared to augment;
I rose with the lark, and would dress in the dark,
And by Tube to the City I went;
From eight to six-thirty I worked as cashier,
When I had five hundred, five hundred a year!

When I had a thousand a year,
More diligent daily I grew;
I would breakfast at nine (if the weather was fine),
And I stayed at the office till two.
The brainwork was heavy, the strain was severe,
When I had a thousand, a thousand a year!

Canned Classics

When I had ten thousand a year,
No respite from toil I enjoyed;
I went to dull balls, and paid afternoon calls,
And shot grouse (for the poor Unemployed).
I hired an estate, with a park full of deer,
When I had ten thousand, ten thousand a year!

With seventy thousand a year,
My work ev'ry moment grows more;
I buy motor-cars, and I open bazaars,
And I struggle to fill up Form IV.
And oft I recall, with a sigh or a tear,
My leisurely life on a hundred a year!

WINTER!

LET minstrels make music of Midsummer madness,
And troubadours warble their songs about Spring!
I welcome the Winter, I greet it with gladness,
Its praises I publish, its splendours I sing!
For who can conceive so seductive a season,
So grateful and comforting, sweet and sublime,
As that which I laud with such excellent reason
And rhyme?

The Summer is over! No more shall we shiver,
In raiment unsuitably scanty and thin;
No more shall we freeze in a punt on the river,
Or picnic at Pangbourne, wet through to the skin!
No more, when the cold in our bedrooms is biting,
To comfortless couches forlornly retire,
Or feel economical qualms about lighting
The fire!

Canned Classics

No more without coats shall we breast Piccadilly,
To Summer's most merciless rigours exposed,
Nor occupy domiciles cheerless and chilly,
With grates unillumined and windows unclosed!
No more, in a breeze that would blow a fuzee out,
And rain that in torrents persistently pours,
Shall country relations invite us in to tea, out
Of doors!

The house (or hotel) that we chance to inhabit
Is warmed in the friendliest fashion again;
Once more in our garments of sealskin (or rabbit)
We travel in comfort by tram or by train.
In soft carpet slippers—to shield from a splinter—
We bask where the flames from the fender burn clear,
Rejoicing at heart to remember that Winter
Is here!

THE LINGUIST

(During the German Emperor's recent visit to Brussels Baron de Haulteville, Director of the Congo Museum, was presented to His Majesty. The Kaiser "spoke at length with the Baron in French, German, and English," says the *Daily Mail*.)

"GUTEN MORGEN, mon ami!
Heute ist es schönes Wetter!
Charmé de vous voir ici!
Never saw you looking better!"

"Hoffentlich que la Baronne,
So entzuckend et so pleasant,
Ist in Brussels cet automne.
Combien wunsch'ich she were present!"

"Und die kinder, how are they?
Ont ils eu la rougeole lately?
Sind sie avec vous to-day?
J'aimerais les treffen greatly."

"Ich muss chercher mon hotel.
What a charming schwätzerei, sir!
Lebe wohl! Adieu! Farewell!
Vive le Congo! Hoch der Kaiser!"

THE POSTMAN AND THE LIFT

("'Most of our tenants pay rents of from £350 a year upward,' says Mr. Goddard, of Messrs. Goddard and Smith, the well-known Piccadilly house agents, 'and would strongly resent having to ride up and down in lifts with postmen.'"—*Daily Mail.*)

I USED to live in Jermyn Street,
  Upon the seventh floor.
I occupied a charming suite,
Bed, bath, and boudoir, all complete;
  That flat is mine no more!
For in my lute appeared a rift:
They let the postman use the lift!

Was it for this I had to pay
  Three hundred pounds a year?
I never shall forget the day
A relative arrived to stay
  (First cousin to a peer);
My word! How Aunt Eliza sniff'd!
She met a postman in the lift!

The Postman and the Lift

"What!" she demanded, "must I ride
"With common men like him?"
She drew her scornful skirts aside,
Her smelling-bottle she applied,
She shook in ev'ry limb.
"Be good enough," she said, "to sift
"The lower orders from the lift!"

"Good Goddard! Fellow," I exclaimed,
"Is there no public stair?
"Are there no regulations framed
"To make a working man ashamed
"To breathe his betters' air?
"To anarchy we surely drift
"When common postmen use the lift!"

In vain I claim my legal rights,
My landlord won't give way.
He says his pity it excites
To see men scaling seven flights
So many times a day.
To other chambers I must shift,
Where postmen never use the lift!

BAD FORM

(One of the worst tendencies of the age is its reverence for non-essentials. We object to things not so much because they are wrong as because they are in questionable taste.)

SINCE Robinson poisoned his mother,
I never have liked him as much;
Some natural instinct or other
Impels me to shrink from his touch.
For though no one ever suspects me
Of being unduly straitlaced,
It isn't his deed that affects me
So much as his lack of good taste.
To murder one's parent I cannot but view
As one of those things that "no feller can do."

When Jones gets a term of hard labour,
For robbing a publican's till;
When Tomkins half-ruins a neighbour,
By forging his name on a bill;
I look upon either proceeding
As—well, just a trifle too "warm";
It shows such an absence of breeding,
It argues such doosid bad form.
I'm fairly broadminded, and tolerant too,
But "time" is a thing that "no feller can do."

Bad Form

The byways of human transgression
  My footsteps shall never ensnare;
The thief's is a vulgar profession,
  A murder's a messy affair.
Blackmail as a pastime is poorish,
  Polygamy seems so unkind,
The burglar is terribly boorish,
  The pickpocket *so* unrefined.
Though wrong may appeal to the mannerless few,
It's one of those things that "no feller can do."

PRESENTS

("The general way in which wedding presents are given nowadays is unwisely sentimental," says Professor William R. Smith, Principal of the Royal Institute of Public Health. "The economic result on the recipients is that they strive to 'live up' to the magnificence of these gifts, but generally fail badly.")

WHEN Clarence and Maud were engaged to be wedded,
No symptoms of arrogance either displayed;
The former was frugal and quite levelheaded,
The latter was modest and staid.
But after each generous friend and relation
Had furnished a present for bridegroom and bride,
They both had a bout of extreme ostentation,
All canons of thrift they defied;
Each coffee-pot, inkstand, and silver-gilt cup, too,
Was something they felt they were bound to "live up to."

Their Chippendale sideboard (the gift of a cousin)
'Neath loads of the costliest viands was bent;
They filled with rare wines the decanters (two dozen)
Which distant connexions had sent.
They ordered fresh salmon and whitebait *ad libit.*,
And pounds of the choicest sea-trout they could get,
Just merely to find an excuse to exhibit
Their fish-slice (from Mr. Gillett).
Regardless of cost all their neighbours they fêted,
To show that their dishes were silver, not plated.

Presents

They wasted their substance, and found they must rue it
When shortly their humble finances gave out,
And forced them to pawn Aunt Hermione's cruet,
Put Uncle Tom's spoons up the spout,
Dispose of the tea-set Mamma had presented,
And sell (at a loss) all their Sheraton chairs,
And leave the magnificent flat they had rented
To house all these treasures of theirs;
And now in an attic—since fortune is fickle—
They have to "live down to" *one* toast-rack of nickel!

46912

THE MARRIAGEABLE AGE

(Miss May Sutton, the American lady tennis champion, has broken her engagement, because she considers that no woman ought to marry before the age of twenty-five. Several English novelists have written to the *Daily Mail* to say that thirty is a more suitable age.)

When Cyrus Blight, the Doughnut King,
Proposed to me, one day in Spring,
When I was seventeen,
Though with romance my soul was fired,
And very deeply I desired
To be his Doughnut Queen,
"No, no!" I cried. "The world is wide!
"I will not be the blushing bride
"Of any Pittsburg 'tough'!
"So, Cyrus, git! Don't think you're It!"
I handed him the frozen mitt,
And said I guessed I'd wait a bit,
I wasn't old enough!

I got engaged at twenty-one,
To Hannibal P. Bromide Dunn,
Of Waybacksville, N.Y.
Adonis would have envied him,
So graceful was his ev'ry limb,
So bright his either eye!

The Marriageable Age

But though I shared his chewing-gum,
And told him that I loved him some,
'Twas mere Platonic bluff;
And when he named the day and church,
And bade me quit my single perch,
I left poor Bromide in the lurch,
I wasn't old enough!

From twenty-three to twenty-four,
I jilted half-a-dozen more,
And left them high and dry;
I "shook" two foreigners of rank,
And told the Chairman of a bank
To kiss himself goodbye.
"Now, Jawn," I'd say, "quit getting gay!
"Leggo my fingers, Hiram J.,
"Don't be so fresh and rough!
"What foolish fancies fill your head!
"When I agreed that we should wed,
"I didn't mean a word I said,
"I wasn't old enough!"

At thirty-five I had to yield.
Behold me, single, in the field,
A spinster self-confess'd.
Within my heart no late lark sings,
No dilatory Cupid slings
His arrows at my breast!

Canned Classics

My erstwhile suitors pass me by,
However deftly I apply
    My rouge and powder-puff!
No serried rows of pie-eyed beaux
Can summon courage to propose,
Although, as Heaven only knows,
    I *must* be old enough!

THE POET'S LIFE

("A poet's life must almost necessarily be troubled," says Mr. Yeats. "If you could find a perfectly steady nature, you would find a silent one.")

How little does the public guess
The poet's fount of inspiration,
The dull despair, the storm and stress,
The pain and tribulation,
The doleful days, the sleepless nights,
That darken ev'ry line he writes!

The noblest bards have all required
A tragic source from which to borrow;
The choicest epics were inspired
By some domestic sorrow.
I wrote my masterpiece that morning
When both the parlourmaids gave warning.

When from a window in Whitehall
A flow'r-pot on my skull descended,
I penned those lines which nearly all
The critics labelled "splendid";
That pot impinging on my cranium
Inspired my "Ode to a Geranium."

Canned Classics

I wrote my "Ballad of Blue Blood,"
So haunting, exquisite and tender,
The evening that my collar-stud
Rolled underneath the fender.
Were finer couplets ever written
By any man less sorely smitten?

My daughter, when she ran away
With Captain Jones (renowned for tippling),
Inspired a military lay
Which ranks with those of Kipling.
(I'd vainly groped for rhymes to "tunic,"
Till she eloped and went to Munich.)

When my investments all went wrong,
And ruin came with loss of wages,
I carved the "jewels five words long'
Which sparkle in these pages.
What makes me so intensely funny
Is simply that I need the money!

THE BATTUE OF BERLIN

(A Long Way After Southey)

(During the Tsar's visit to Berlin last year the German Emperor entertained his Royal suite at a battue, at which, "in favourable weather," says the *Daily Mail*, "492 stags were killed during an hour's shooting.")

It was a winter's morning,
The Kaiser's sport was done;
From far and near the driven deer
Had faced the Royal "gun," *
And all around, in grim array,
Five hundred rotting corpses lay.

From near and far, to King and Tsar
The startled herds had fled;
And many a stag had swelled the bag,
And many a hind lay dead.
Such things must be and will, in short,
After a famous hour of sport!

* "Rifle" does not rhyme.

Canned Classics

It was the German Emperor
  Who slew five hundred deer;
But what he killed so many for
  Is not completely clear.
But all the journalists report
That 'twas a famous morning's sport.

From left and right, in furious flight,
  The stags to slaughter came;
Each beast, deceased, by death increased
  This holocaust of game.
And, after all (you may retort),
It was a famous morning's sport.

Let sportsmen raise their hymns of praise
  To those who made such bags,
Who in an hour evinced the pow'r
  To slay five hundred stags,
While I repeat (how dare you snort?)
That 'twas a famous morning's sport!

THE CRAVEN

(With Apologies to Edgar Allen Poe)

(At the last General Election the Unionist and Liberal candidates for Chelsea both enjoyed the name of Hoare.)

Ah! distinctly I remember, 'twas an evening in November,
When I canvassed for the Member whose rosette I proudly wore,
Rousing voters to reflection on the Veto and Protection,
Handing tracts in each direction, thrusting bills through ev'ry door,
Till I reached the Chelsea section, where each rival's name is Hoare,
Simply that and nothing more!

There I argued with each zany, and cajoled the bright and brainy,
In the district labelled Cheyné (where Carlyle abode of yore),
Till I found a man, a craven, with his feeble chin unshaven,
Ev'ry window of whose haven a perplexing placard bore,
'Twas a poster neatly graven with the motto: "Vote for Hoare!"
Only that and nothing more!

"Tell me which," I asked him, snorting, "of the two you are supporting;
"On your window-sills the sporting of such posters I deplore;
"Be you dunderhead or scholar" (here I seized him by the collar),
"Will you brook the Yankee Dollar being dumped on Britain's shore?
"Do you fancy, in your squalor, that your food will cost you more?"
Quoth the craven: "Vote for Hoare!"

My acquaintance thus I rallied, till I grew fatigued and pallid,
But my arguments (though valid) he continued to ignore;
"Shall an alien contribution help to wreck the Constitution?"
I inquired, in consecution, till my throat was dry and sore.
"Are you keen on Devolution? Tell me frankly, I implore!"
Quoth the craven: "Vote for Hoare!"

THE SOLITARY FLAPPER

(With Apologies to Wordsworth)

(Suggested by the sight of a youthful Suffragette attempting to enter the hall where a Cabinet Minister was delivering a speech.)

Behold her, single in the street,
  Yon solitary Suffrage-lass,
Where "coppers," with enormous feet,
  Decline to let her pass.
Alone she kicks and bites her way
Through crowds of constables at bay;
O listen! All the world, it seems,
Re-echoes with the maiden's screams!

No peacock on a garden lawn,
  No infant pigs attacked by bees,
No rooster at the break of dawn,
  Can make such sounds as these;
No jays can emulate the note
That issues from her raucous throat.
Such cries inebriates cannot raise,
Immured in distant Holloways.

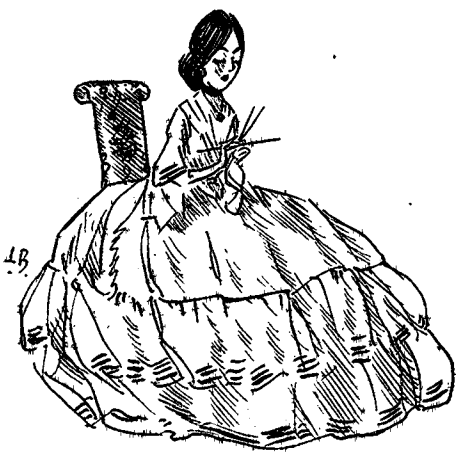
Canned Classics

Will no one tell me why she flings
  (Like hooligans who used to throw
Bad eggs, unhealthy cast-off things
  And bottles long ago)
Macadam gathered from the streets
At ev'ry Minister she meets?
Oh, is it just to cause him pain,
Or does she hope the Vote to gain?

Whate'er her scheme, the spinster cried
  As though her cries could have no ending;
I stood and watched her, open-eyed,
  Her leather lungs distending.
I listened till I had my fill,
And, as she went on screaming still,
I termed her, in my heart, a bore,
And then—I thought of her no more.

THE NEW NOBILITY

(A titled Suffragette, imprisoned for stone-throwing and hatchet-brandishing, has declared that the new kind of nobility, practised by her militant sisters, is the best kind of nobility after all.)



TIME was when a maiden blue-blooded
Was dignified, dainty, demure;
At home in seclusion she budded,
Well-sheltered, surrounded, secure.
She drove in the Park with her mother,
She practised some new minuet,
She knitted a tie for her brother,
Or played the spinet.
When other folks scuffled, she kept at a distance,
And nothing beruffled her placid existence.

Time was when a lady of title
From vulgar publicity shrank,
And deemed as of consequence vital
The deference due to her rank.
No duties domestic neglecting,
The head of her house she became,
In mien and behaviour respecting
The family name.
Her babe she would dandle, or bosomwards snatch it,
And harmlessly handle a harp—not a hatchet!

Canned Classics

Those manners and days are forgotten;
  Our feminine aristocrats
Throw brickbats and eggs that are rotten
  At Cabinet Councillors' hats,
Establishing claims to a vote or
  To rank with the "governing class,"
By storming a Minister's motor
    And smashing the glass;
Till persons who witness such deeds with vexation,
Discredit their fitness for Representation.

A truce to these bricks and these banners!
  Good ladies, your spirits suppress,
And leave us (I quote Lord John Manners),
  Oh, leave us our ancient noblesse!
Be "ladies" in *conduct*—or try to—
  Nor advertise blood that is blue
By turning each constable's eye to
    A similar hue!
For ladies who bite all the "coppers" they're able
A "courtesy" title is *not* the right label!

ANDREW'S ADVICE

("Mr. Carnegie, in an impromptu talk to some girls employed in the office of a magazine where he was making a call, advised them not to refuse a man merely because he was a millionaire."—*Daily Mail.*)

FAIR maidens, do not lightly shun
  Each plutocratic wooer,
Discard him not for any one,
For pauper peer or younger son,
  Whose shekels may be fewer.
This dread of wedding with the wealthy
Is morbid, not to say unhealthy.

Within the breast of millionaires
  The heart that goes "Tic-ticky"
Beneath those diamond solitaires
Beats true as that the poor man wears
  Below his humbler dicky.
The rich have passions just as tender
As those of men whose means are slender.

Canned Classics

And ere ye thoughtlessly reject
  Some suitor inoffensive,
Fair maidens, ponder and reflect
That Life is costly, recollect,
  And Happiness expensive.
Be careful then, if you'd ensure it,
To wed a Crœsus, not a curate!

For tho' to a Carnegie's mind
  The rich are born to trouble,
Their burden, so we always find,
Is one they're seldom disinclined
  Or indisposed to double.
Tho' Wealth's an evil (Who can doubt it?)
There's one thing worse—to be without it!

TOPICAL ETHICS

("Morality," says Mr. John Lane, the publisher, "is merely geographical.")

MORALITY, wherever met,
Is merely local etiquette.
In diff'rent lands, to be precise,
Vice may be Virtue, Virtue Vice,
And that which one would label Crime
Is Custom in another clime.

The habits of the Eskimo
Appear peculiar in Bordeaux;
St. James's Street may well object
To language Limehouse deems correct;
What Petersburg considers mean
Seems generous in Aberdeen.

The tales Parisians greet with mirth
Revolt the "unco guid" of Perth;
The Riviera's harmless jokes
Make spinsters blush in Sevenoaks:
And Brighton's morals, as a rule,
Offend the puritans of Goole.

Canned Classics

The fashion Battersea condemns
May be the *dernier cri* at Ems;
Salome's garb, which Leeds deplores,
Is quite the mode in the Azores,
But Little Maoris might provoke
The righteous wrath of Basingstoke.

So with the books each author sells:
While Tunbridge patronises Wells,
More lurid works command their sales
In Cardigan, perhaps, or Wales;
And who am I to cast a stone
At tastes that differ from my own?

In Utah State I might insist
On being a polygamist;
The fact of lodging in Soho
Might deal my moral sense a blow,
Or contact with the Pole, forsooth,
Corrupt my honest love of Truth.

Morality, wherever met,
Is merely local etiquette.

THE DIRT CURE

"Abandon Soap all ye who enter here!"

("I do not think cleanliness is to be recommended as an hygienic method. . . . The whole of the doctrine of fresh air requires to be revised. . . . There is no evidence that the man who does not take physical exercise is more liable to disease than the man who does."—SIR ALMROTH WRIGHT.)

TIME was when I gaily would wash myself daily;
My body with soapsuds I polished;
Each morning I plotted to issue unspotted
From baths (that have since been abolished).
But though I might lather and scrub with a will, I
Could never elude those confounded bacilli!

Time was when each casement, from at tic to basement,
Stood open all night to the breezes;
My molars might chatter, but what did that matter,
Thought I, if I staved off diseases?
A practice so rigorous merely unstrung me,
And germs floated in at the window, and stung me!

Time was when I nightly would bicycle brightly
Round Battersea Park, in a "sweater";
I felt that such vigour would strengthen my figure,
And render my appetite better.
Alas! 'neath my cycling costume (called a "bike-robe")
I still was a prey to each virulent microbe!

Canned Classics

The scientist's scathing indictment of bathing
  Has altered my methods completely.
I've giving up coping with windows, or soaping;
  My sponges are packed away neatly.
My bicycle's sold, and I can't understand how
I ever attempted to emulate Sandow!

Unkempt and a sloven, in rooms like an oven,
  I lead a most healthy existence;
My stout epidermis so horny and firm is,
  Bacilli are kept at a distance.
No germ in my armour discovers a juncture;
My body no microbe is able to puncture!

NEW YEAR'S DAY

No more do plum puddings, with fragrant aroma,
The nostrils of Christmas carousers caress;
No more are we sunk in a stertorous coma,
Induced by our recent excess.
We banish mince-pies to a suitable distance,
To stockings their recognised functions restore,
And take up the threads of our normal existence
Once more.

The Old Year is ended, the New is beginning;
What hopes do we cherish, what projects and schemes
Of wrongs to be righted, of triumphs worth winning!
What castles we build in our dreams!
With consciences guiltless, and sound constitutions,
Our former bad habits we vow to forsake;
And oh! what a number of good resolutions
We make!

Canned Classics

At golf we engage to replace ev'ry divot,
Nor ever indulge in bad language at all;
Our eye, which has hitherto swung on a pivot,
Shall cling like a leech to the ball.
We vow not to "scorch" in our automobile, or
To scatter our dust on pedestrian folk.
At Bridge we resolve not to make a misdeal or
Revoke!

No more will we treat with contempt or impatience
The counsel bestowed by each outspoken friend;
No more be ashamed of suburban relations,
Who happen to live at Crouch End.
The old shall not fancy us selfish or snappy,
The young shall not deem us morose or severe;
And so the new year shall indeed be a Happy
New Year!

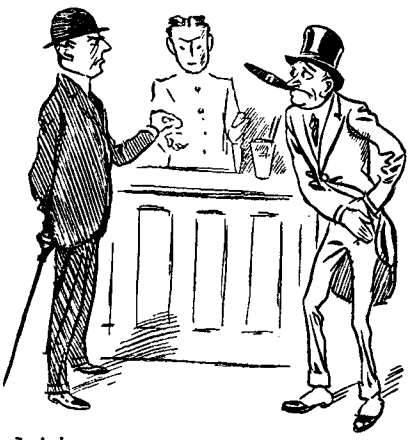
THE SEVEN DEADLY VIRTUES

No. I.—THRIFT

THE practice of Thrift is a talent, a gift,
Which must ever repay cultivation;
For 'tis thus that, by stealth, one accumulates wealth
To transmit to the next generation,
Ev'ry cent that we save, on our road to the grave,
Though the process perhaps may depress us,
Is an heirloom for which, if we chance to die rich,
Our descendants will rise up and bless us;
And it's nice to feel certain that, after we've perished,
Though *we* are forgotten, our gold will be cherished!

My great-uncle Ben was the meanest of men,
He would never let go of a dollar;
As a grudging resort, he ma de use of a wart
On his neck, as a stud for his collar.
He would pasture his cows on the grave of his spouse,
He would rob a blind babe of its bottle,
And he spoke through his nose, with a voice like a crow's,
To avoid wear and tear to his throttle.
But he died, worth a million, intensely respected
By all who divided the wealth he'd collected.

Canned Classics



My cousin Macnab was as close as a crab,
At the smallest disbursement he grumbled;
He would order cigars at American bars
And allow one to pay, while he fumbled.
But he made a big pile, in this niggardly style,
And at last, when by Fate he was smitten,
He bequeathed in his will the contents of his till
To a College of Thrift in North Britain;
And the public of Scotland were loud in their praises,
And garnished his tomb with a wreath of cheap daisies.

Macnab's only son has exhibited none
Of the virtues his parent presented;
All his money he spends upon indigent friends,
Or on making poor people contented.
He subscribes to bazaars, and he buys motor-cars,
And gives parties (extravagant fellow!)
At the Waldorf or Ritz, which supply spicy "bits"
To the journals distinguished as Yellow;
Till the Bankruptcy Court stands already before him,
And friends are beginning to cut and ignore him.

MORAL.

The Moral, of course, is to work like a horse,
And to save ev'ry coin you can muster,
That your sons who survive, though they loathed you alive,
Round your deathbed may hopefully cluster.

Thrift

When your posthumous hoard they have deftly explored,
All your faults they will soon be forgiving,
And dissemble the scorn of the plutocrat born
For a person who "worked for his living."
"Poor dear Father," they'll say, though in tones rather rancid,
"He really was not such a fool as we fancied!"

No. II.—CANDOUR

FROM the days of my earliest youth,
I was taught, both in fable and song,
That the habit of Truth was a virtue, in sooth,
And that Falsehood was foolish and wrong;
But although to this popular view one must pander,
'Tis terribly hard to appreciate Candour.

Though Truth be a beautiful thing,
As direct as a bee in its flight,
It can harbour a sting, like a wasp on the wing,
For the victim on whom it may light;
And by so-called "home-truths," if unsparingly scattered,
The concord of homes is too frequently shattered.

Yes, Truth should be tempered with tact,
As I know from my son-in-law Mike,
Who is always exact, with a passion for fact
Which his relatives greatly dislike.
If you ask him the price of a hat you've been buying,
He guesses correctly at once—which is trying!

Candour

Should he dine at your house, any day,
Though a passable cellar you keep,
He will probably say, as he sniffs its *bouquet*,
That your wine *tastes* remarkably cheap.
When you state that you fear that your cook's heavy-handed,
He answers "She is!" (This he calls "being candid.")

Poor Mike was a faddist, a crank,
Who in telling home-truths took a pride,
And my heart always sank when he said "To be frank—"
For I knew what that statement implied;
I remembered how oft this preamble preceded
Some captious remark which, if true, was unneeded.

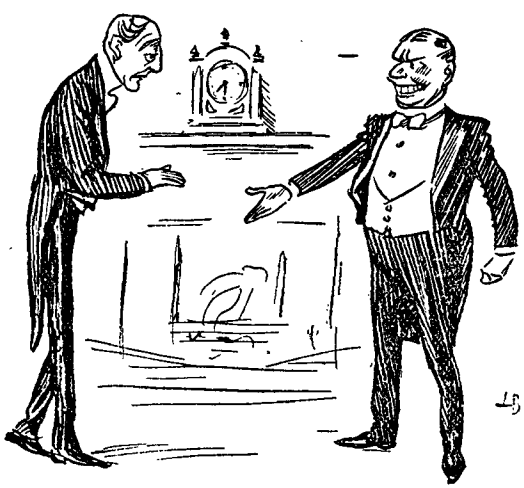
MORAL.

Since Candour deserves a short shrift,
Let us husband each tactless home-truth,
And dispense it with thrift, like some rare kind of gift,
As we'd part with a final eye-tooth.
For if Truth in a well has a fondness for staying,
To "Let well alone" is a text worth obeying!

No. III.—PUNCTUALITY

PUNCTUALITY, my brothers,
Plays a most important rôle;
It comprises thought for others,
Order, method, self-control,
Qualities of mind and soul
Which we need in our relations
With the social life of nations.

Prematureness makes men surly,
Tardiness evokes their spleen;
Not too late, and not too early
—Somewhere midway in between—
Constitutes the Golden Mean
Requisite for obviating
All the weary woes of waiting.



I've a tiresome Uncle Bertie
Who is nearly always late;
Comes to dine about eight-thirty,
Though my meal is timed for *eight;*
And of course I have to wait,
While the soup becomes quite *chilly,*
And the *soufflé* tastes like skilly.

Punctuality

He arrived, one day, for luncheon,
Just as I had finished tea;
Started off at once to munch on
Any food that he could see:
"I'm a meal behind," said he.
Vain, alas! was his endeavour!
Meals once missed are lost for ever!

Charles, another near relation,
Should he on some journey start,
Hastens to the railway station,
With a palpitating heart,
Long before his trains depart.
There for hours he sits and freezes,
Catching chills and such diseases.

When to balls or parties bidden,
Far too early he arrives,
And within his cab, half hidden,
Round and round the streets he drives,
As to pass the time he strives,
Till the hour of invitation
Saves him further pererration.

Canned Classics

MORAL.

Permanent procrastination,
  Is the Thief of Time, men say;
While undue precipitation,
  Though it errs the other way,
  Causes just as much dismay.
Early birds grow stout and burly:
Worms, alas! can rise too early!

No. IV.—MODESTY

READER, if you are wise, acquire
  Of Modesty (that sterling virtue)
Enough for people to admire,
    But not enough to hurt you.
Humility, men all concede,
  Although by pedants highly rated,
In practice often may, indeed,
    Be over-cultivated.
'Tis well to boast of just a touch,
But fatal to possess too much.

It was not Modesty alone
  That gave Hall Caine his circulation;
Not Miss Corelli's humble tone
    That made her reputation.
In Winston Churchill's dogged jaw
  No signs of diffidence are patent;
The bashfulness of Bernard Shaw,
    If it exists, is latent.
Sheer Modesty, we must confess,
Is not the key to *their* success.

Canned Classics

I had two cousins, Paul and Walt,
Each utterly unlike the other;
The one was modest to a fault,
A braggart was his brother.
His doings Paul would glorify,
His gifts and talents loudly "booming,"
But Walt was humble, silent, shy,
Reserved and unassuming.
Though Paul his prowess would exalt,
No boastful words were heard from Walt.

Time passed. While Walt his quiet ways
Was unpretentiously pursuing,
His brother Paul took care to praise
Whatever he was doing;
Till those who heard his trumpet blown
With such relentless iteration,
Began to take him at his own
Abnormal valuation.
Men grew at last to feel that Paul
Must be a hero, after all.

His worth they heard him advertise,
And (since they had his word to go on)
Began to think him brave and wise
And chivalrous and so on.
His wit he daily would proclaim,
Till people ceased at length to doubt him,

Modesty

And thus a legendary fame
Shone halo-like about him.
The whole world judged him really great
(Except his wife, I needn't state).

Meanwhile poor Walt, whom I should gauge
Far abler than his boastful brother,
Was earning a starvation wage
In some concern or other;
And though his modest mien was praised,
And men extolled his self-effacement,
His salary was never raised,
He languished in a basement.
The world's regard for him was small,
(His wife, of course, had none at all.)

MORAL.

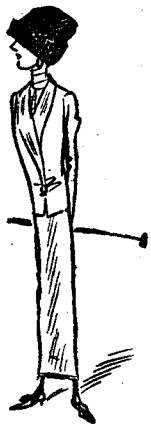
The Moral, which is clear and plain
To any one with observation,
Is that a man has naught to gain
From self-depreciation.
The modest person may appear
An object fit for friends' devotion;
He will not carve a great career,
Nor ever win promotion.
The World, whose sight is dull and blurred,
Too often takes men at their word!

No. V.—CLEANLINESS

CLEANLINESS, which once was reckoned
Next to godliness akin,
Now no longer ranks as second
To its less attractive twin.
Men who seldom strive to grapple
With the problems of their creed,
Who neglect both Church and Chapel,
And to conscience pay no heed,
Make a daily institution
Of their personal ablution.

In the past, our forebears gaily
Washed their necks but once a week;
He who laved his body daily
Was regarded as a freak.
Nowadays, in modern houses,
We have bath-rooms by the score;
Man no longer shares his spouse's
Basin on the bedroom floor;
While his offspring—son or daughter—
Seems for ever in "hot water."

Cleanliness



On her habit's "sweet disorder"
Woman's lovers used to dote;
Swains in bygone days adored her
Too "tempestuous petticoat."
Nowadays, to Woman's neatness
Compliments are always paid,
And a man's idea of "sweetness"
Is a maid who's "tailor-made,"
With a sash her knees enwrapping,
To prevent her skirts from flapping.

From our latter-day obsession
Genius always was exempt;
Massive brains would find expression
In habiliments unkempt.
But to-day the budding artist
Wears no squalid velveteen;
His attire is of the smartest,
And his nails are often clean.
Even poets' cuffs are tidy.
(I renew mine ev'ry Friday.)

Men who morally may wander
From the "straight and narrow path,"
But who, day by day, grow fonder
Of the matutinal bath;
Women, faithless and coquettish,
With no thoughts beyond their dress,

Canned Classics

Who have learnt to make a fetish
Of the cult of cleanliness;
Though their hearts are black and hardened,
Find their vices freely pardoned.

MORAL.

Let us be—the phrase sounds oddly—
Cleanly, if we can't be godly!

No. VI.—AMIABILITY

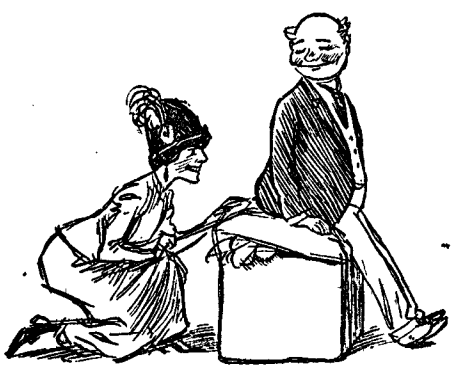
How fond I was of Uncle Dan!
Not since Creation first began
Was there a more good-natured man,
More kindly or indulgent.
His ample face (he weighed a ton)
On ev'rything and ev'ry one
Shone like some vast, benignant sun,
As warm and as effulgent.
A simple soul, devoid of guile,
His life was one unending smile.

He never lost his self-control
At golf when, at the eighteenth hole,
His "putt" was bunkered by a mole,
Or he was laid a "stymie";
He never got the least annoyed
When children (semi-anthropoid)
His priceless ornaments destroyed
Or made his shirt-front grimy;
At Bridge he took it as a joke
If partners happened to revoke.

Canned Classics

I still remember how he smiled
When Gwendolen, his only child,
Was by a foreigner beguiled
And afterwards deserted;
And when his youngest nephew, Phil,
Who forged his name upon a bill,
Presented it, with cunning skill,
And into cash converted,
A smile my uncle's face o'erspread:
"Boys will be boys!" was all he said.

And when his wife eloped, one day,
Because she could no longer stay
With one who never would display
The slightest sign of temper,
More wide my uncle's grins became,
He uttered not a word of blame,
His motto still remained the same:
"Still smiling!" ("*Ridens semper*").
He helped his erring spouse to pack,
And, later on, he took her back.



At last his friends could bear no more.
They led him to the mad-house door,
Where he, poor soul! to swell the score
Of demi-wits was added.
Such trials he was still above;
"Strait-waistcoats," he remarked, "I love;

Amiability

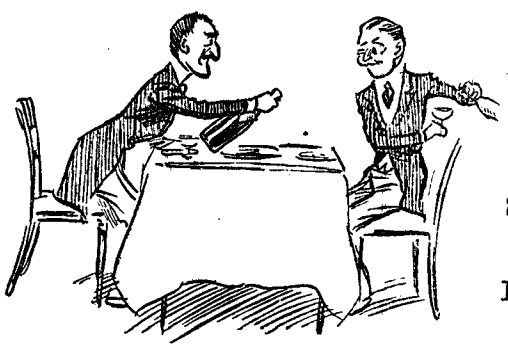
"They really fit one like a glove;
"How well this cell is padded!
"Cocaine is a delightful drug!
"This water-bed is nice and snug!"

MORAL.

Though hearts by kindliness are won,
Good-nature can be overdone;
Excessive smiling we should shun,
Such sweetness can be cloying;
And men who, when our temper's short,
Decline to quarrel or show sport,
But still with courtesy retort,
Are terribly annoying.
A healthy grumble, now and then,
Is good for women and for men.

No. VII.—SOBRIETY

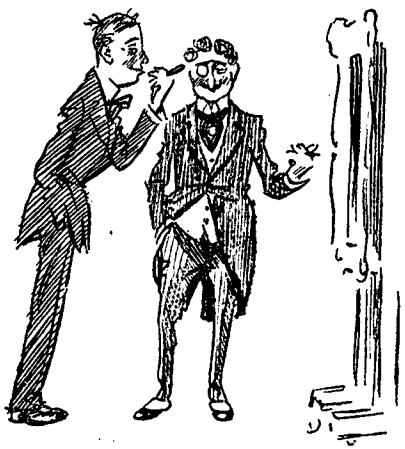
Ere I close my mournful medley,
Sage conclusions let me cull
From a virtue that is "deadly"
In the sense of being "dull."
Thus the critics who may quarrel
With my methods, and complain
That my tone is most immoral
And profane,
Shall retract each base aspersion
And withdraw the accusation
That I compass the perversion
Of the rising generation.



If you're lunching with a stranger,
And he offers you champagne,
Look ahead, my son, for danger,
And judiciously refrain.
Stick to simple soda-water,
And decline your comrade's "cham.,"
Lest he lead you to the slaughter,
Like a lamb.

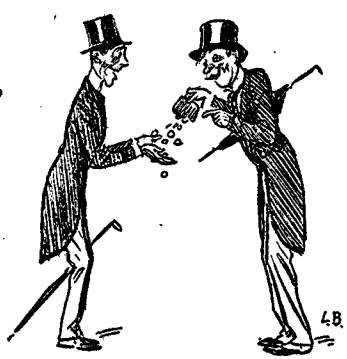
Sobriety

The indulgence, out of season,
Of one's alcoholic fancies,
Plays the dickens with one's reason
And the deuce with one's finances.



By a Hebrew friend invited
To discuss the mid-day meal,
I expressed myself delighted,
For I wished to do a deal;
But I gargled indiscreetly,
While my host kept high and dry,
And he "did" me rather neatly
In the eye!
It was Drink that spelt Disaster,
And I felt morose and mirthless
When he sold me an "Old Master"
That was absolutely worthless.

When my cousin, James MacVicar,
Who's a simple sort of soul,
Took an overdose of liquor
And mislaid his self-control,
People seemed to think it funny,
Though I found it the reverse,
Till he lent me all the money
In his purse;
Then, unloosening his collar
(I am not devoid of pity),
I advanced him half a dollar
For his cab-fare to the City.



Canned Classics

I've an uncle (dear old fellow!)
Who's a trifle short of wits;
He becomes extremely mellow
When I feast him at the Ritz.
If I lubricate his throttle
With sufficient "Mountain Dew,"
At about the second bottle
He gets "fou";
Then I teach him to play euchre,
And with ease proceed to rout him,
And acquire what filthy lucre
He may chance to have about him!

MORAL.

Only thus, my friends and brothers,
If all tipple you eschew,
Can you hope to do to others
What they would that they could do
Unto you!

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